



Siddaramaiah meets Rahul Gandhi with 'wishlist' day after stepping down as CM

►A day after stepping down as Karnataka Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah met Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge in Delhi with his list of demands. The discussions included Rajya Sabha and MLC names as well as key cabinet portfolios for his son Yathindra.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A day after stepping down as Karnataka Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah on Friday met Rahul Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge in Delhi, presenting his list of demands to the party high command, including plum portfolios for his son Yathindra in the new DK Shivakumar-led cabinet. According to sources, Siddaramaiah handed over lists of names for Rajya Sabha and MLC appointments, along with his preferences for cabinet positions. Sources said he also pushed for key portfolios for his son, Yathindra Siddaramaiah, including medical education and backward classes, or alternatively industries or water resources, a portfolio which was held by Shivakumar. Now, after the dust has settled over handing the reins to



Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah has turned down the Rajya Sabha seat offered by the high command and expressed his keenness to stay rooted in Karnataka politics. "I'll continue in active politics. I have no interest in national politics," Siddaramaiah said on Thursday, shortly after stepping down. "I was also asked about the Rajya Sabha. I declined it. I want to remain in Karnataka politics," he added. That Siddaramaiah, Karnataka's longest-serving Chief Minister, still holds sway over the state was evident in both his decision to turn down a bigger national role and the influence he continues to wield over several ministers who served in his cabinet. Sources told India Today that when the Congress high command offered Satish Jarkiholi, who was the PWD minister in the Siddaramaiah cabinet, the post of KPCC (Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee) president, he said he would consult Siddaramaiah.

Legal Maneuvering and Social Media Fantasies: Abhay Chopra Launches Sharp Attack on Jagat, Says "Stop Imitating Detective Novels and Spreading Fiction"

Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Mekan

Nagda. An ongoing internal dispute within sections of the Jain community has now spilled into the public domain, with heated exchanges playing out across social media platforms. Prominent Nagda-based social activist Abhay Chopra has launched a strong criticism of an individual identified as Jagat, questioning his conduct and accusing him of spreading baseless narratives without evidence. Chopra asserted that fabricated allegations and speculative stories are creating unnecessary confusion within the community and diverting attention from genuine social concerns. "I Am a Law Graduate, Not a Participant in Childish Games" In a strongly worded public statement, Chopra remarked: "I told you on the phone, and I am saying it again today—I am a law graduate, while your actions resemble those of a fourth or fifth-grade student. It appears that you spent too much time reading detective novels in childhood and now try to recreate those imaginary plots on social media. Every day, new stories are presented without facts, logic, or evidence. You do not see dreams at night; you seem to see them daily on social media." Questions Raised Over Community



Disputes and Financial Allegations Addressing the broader controversy, Chopra clarified that the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Jain Sadhu Sant Raksha Samiti operates transparently and has nothing to hide. He alleged that certain individuals have attempted to create controversy for personal gain and publicity. Commenting on ongoing legal matters, Chopra cautioned community members against being misled by premature claims and legal speculation. He stated that the matter remains at an early procedural stage and urged people not to rely on unverified interpretations being circulated online. Key Allegations Made by Chopra Baseless Storytelling Chopra accused Jagat of repeatedly publishing unverified claims and sensa-

tional narratives on social media without supporting evidence. Self-Appointed Judge of Character He alleged that some individuals have assumed the role of moral arbiters, behaving as though they possess the authority to issue "character certificates" for everyone in society. Creating Unnecessary Social Discord According to Chopra, misinformation and exaggerated claims are generating confusion, mistrust, and unnecessary divisions within the community. A Broader Message on the Dangers of Misinformation Concluding his statement, Chopra delivered a broader warning about the impact of misinformation in the digital age. He argued that when individuals with limited knowledge and understanding

begin portraying themselves as unquestionable authorities, they not only mislead themselves but also create mental and social distress for an entire community. He emphasized the need for society to remain vigilant, verify facts before accepting allegations, and avoid being influenced by self-styled "social media investigators" whose claims may lack credibility or evidence. Mahanagar Metro View: The controversy highlights a growing challenge in the era of social media—where unverified allegations can spread rapidly, influence public opinion, and deepen divisions before facts are established. Responsible communication and evidence-based discussion remain essential for maintaining trust and social harmony.

Court denies relief on Cockroach party's X account, seeks review of block order

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought responses from the Union government and X on a plea filed by Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke challenging the blocking of the party's X account, while observing that the matter would require detailed consideration and declining to grant immediate relief. The petition was heard by Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav.

The Court said restoration of the account could be considered only after hearing the Union government, observing that the matter involved larger concerns, the Bar and Bench reported. During the hearing, the judge said, "There may be some substance in your submissions but they all need to be considered. They will be considered holistically after hearing the other side. There are far reaching issues. There are wider ramifications." The Bench also said it would consider whether X could be asked to place the blocking order on record after the Union of India files a detailed reply. Directing that the response be filed within four weeks, the Court listed the matter for hearing on July 6. In the meantime, the Court directed that the blocking order be reviewed. Referring to the applicable rules, it noted that a review committee is required to meet once every two months and has the authority to examine all aspects connected with such an order. The Bench said, "It is directed that the review committee will examine all these aspects. The decision be placed on record."

The Court also recorded that Dipke is not in India and said he may seek permission from the review committee to appear through video conferencing. "The aspect can be examined by the review committee," the Court said. The matter will now come up on July 6 after the Union government files its response and the review.



Settle inter-state water disputes through cooperation: PM Modi

Calls for integrated approach combining river links, groundwater recharge and conservation.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 51st PRAGATI meeting on Wednesday evening and urged states to settle inter-state water disputes through cooperation and faster administrative action. He stressed the importance of timely approvals, close monitoring through technology and coordinated implementation of large public projects. Modi said the Ken-Betwa river-linking project should serve as an example for other states facing similar water-sharing challenges.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister reviewed seven major infrastructure projects in railways, roads, and the power sector across nine states. These projects are valued at nearly Rs 30,000 crore. He noted that delays in public works increase costs and prevent citizens from receiving important services on time. The review focused on deadlines, coordination among agencies and the removal of pending obstacles.

While discussing the Ken-Betwa project, Modi encouraged states to identify similar opportunities involving river-linking, water conservation, groundwater recharge and efficient irrigation systems. He said these measures should be implemented in an integrated manner to ensure long-term water security and better resource management. PRAGATI is an ICT-based platform designed to improve governance and speed up implementation by bringing together the efforts of the Centre and the states. Apart from the river-linking project, the Prime Minister also reviewed the progress of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0.

In the power sector review, Modi highlighted the need to expand rooftop solar installations in urban areas, residential colonies and public institutions. While examining road and port projects, the PM said the Vadnavan Port should be developed as a model for integrated transport hub.

Modi also stressed the effective implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0. He said the programme must move beyond building infrastructure and focus on measurable results through monitoring, public participation and coordination among stakeholders. He directed states to speed up the construction of waste-processing facilities and GOBARDHAN plants.



Karnataka Was A Message. Rahul Gandhi Tests New Playbook For Lok Sabha Battle

►Congress' Karnataka leadership swap, driven by Rahul Gandhi, signals a shift from factional drift to decisive control, with learnings from Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh suggesting the party is prioritising winnability

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Karnataka leadership swap - DK Shivakumar for Siddaramaiah, a switch in the making since November last year - was pushed past the finishing line by Rahul Gandhi, sources told NDTV Friday. Rahul Gandhi, sources said, spoke to both men on Monday and Tuesday, with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, party boss Mallikarjun Kharge, and General Secretary KC Venugopal. The result was a 35-minute one-on-one in which Rahul Gandhi persuaded Siddaramaiah to resign, arguing the veteran politician - one of the Congress' most high-profile OBC faces - had to look beyond the state and at the national



2029 Lok Sabha election. But Siddaramaiah argued the Congress' best chance at re-election was with him in charge. DKS, he said, could take charge of a fresh government in 2028. But Gandhi was adamant, sources said, displaying the same

the impasse in the Kerala chief minister race.

The Kerala example

The party recorded a big win in the April/May election but was then mired in talks for two weeks, with VD Satheesan, KC Venugopal, and Ramesh Chennithala on the chief minister shortlist. In that instance, Rahul Gandhi backed Venugopal. And his close ties with the Gandhi family, as well as his position as the MLAs' choice, suggested his appointment was a given. But as it became clear Satheesan was preferred by the voters, and key ally Indian Union Muslim League, Rahul Gandhi accepted the verdict and changed plans. The Gandhi

meeting to convey and explain the decision, which included, as in the case of Karnataka, consultations with all relevant stakeholders.

In both cases the quiet influence of Priyanka Gandhi was also noted, sources said.

Congress insiders told the Karnataka and Kerala examples indicate the party's core leadership - essentially Kharge, the Gandhi family, and trusted aides like Venugopal - is now more willing to chop and change plans, particularly when circumstances go against favourites.

The Rajasthan 'what if' moment

In 2022, for example, when the Congress was in power in Rajasthan, there was a showdown between then-chief minister

News box

In Gurgaon, BJP rebel in election fray accused of assault, says he wasn't even in city

GURGAON.(Agency)

A city trader has accused businessman-turned-politician Naveen Goyal of being behind a violent assault meant to terrorise him into shutting his factory, an allegation the former Independent Assembly candidate has flatly denied, saying he was in Lucknow at the time and had "no involvement" in the incident.

On May 2, an FIR was registered at Sector-10 police station on the complaint of Praveen Aggarwal, a Sector 14 resident who runs PRK Scaffolding in Saraswati Enclave on Pataudi Road. The FIR invokes sections 115, 333, 324(4) and 32(5) of the BNS, covering voluntarily causing hurt, house trespass with prior preparation to cause hurt, assault or wrongful restraint, mischief, and acts done by several persons with a common intention.

Aggarwal alleged that on April 20, between 6.30pm and 7pm, he was driving home from his factory when a biker deliberately rammed the rear of his car near Shankar Murti opposite Boxer petrol pump. When he lowered the window, the biker allegedly began abusing him and several men quickly surrounded the vehicle.

According to the complaint, the men dragged him out and rained kicks, punches and sticks on him. He said he fell to the ground and pleaded with them to spare him. During the assault, one attacker allegedly warned him to shut his factory and apologise to Naveen Goyal, Deepak Goyal and Satish Tayal, or be killed within days, calling the beating "just a warning".

Deep craters, exposed rods: A risk at every turn here

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A week ago, Vipul Goyal of Shipra Krishna Vista in Indirapuram fell ill. His son lives abroad and he did not have medicines at home. Being a senior citizen and not so tech-savvy, he was left with no other option but to call his 75-year-old neighbour, PL Arora, and request him to get the pills.

It was not that Goyal was unable to step out of his home, but his old age, coupled with the dug-up roads in the area, has made it difficult to walk across the stretch safely. The footpaths in Indian cities aren't pedestrian-friendly. But parts of Ghaziabad do not even have footpaths. Residents of Indirapuram, Kaushambi and Vaishali are forced to walk on the road but with CM-GRID projects and other repair works, they say navigating their neighbourhoods has become hazardous as dug-up roads with protruding iron rods pose risks. The situation worsens during rain, when waterlogging around the excavations makes slipping into open trenches a serious concern, residents said.

"We are aged. We do not stay with our children as they have all moved out for work. With pits dug up all around us, it feels like we have been cooped up in our apartment complex," Goyal's neighbour Arora said. "The day GMC decided to dig these pits one after another, our dependency on each other increased. Now, whenever we learn that someone is stepping out, we send them a list of our daily needs."

A resident of Ahimsa Khand, Seema Aggarwal, said unlike Delhi or Noida, there is no public transport in Ghaziabad. "We are dependent on e-rickshaws and autos to get us to the nearest metro stations. Since they dug up the road in front of my house, I am scared to use these vehicles to travel the last mile. What if the rickshaw trips and straight up lands me in the hospital, who will take care of my family?" she complained.

Residents of Kaushambi, where the entire stretch leading to the metro station has been dug up with missing barricades, have complained about how the dug-up roads have disrupted their daily routines, particularly their morning walks. Many elderly residents said the uneven stretches and loose debris have forced them to remain indoors.

Man gets 20 years in jail for raping 6-year-old girl in 2023

Ghaziabad. Agency)

A special Poeso court sentenced a 22-year-old man to 20 years in jail for sexually assaulting a 6-year-old girl three years ago. The accused had lured a girl from his neighbourhood away to assault her, but was caught by her mother in the act.

Additional sessions Judge Poonam-II said the accused committed aggravated penetrative sexual assault on a girl, approximately 6 years old. "This type of act creates a feeling of insecurity among the people living in the neighbourhood, which in turn increases the feeling of distrust even towards neighbours in society. Therefore, considering all the facts and circumstances of the case and the accused's social and economic status, he deserves to be punished with 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine under Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012," the judge said.

An FIR was registered against the accused and his mother with Ankur Vihar police station on Nov 6, 2023. The complainant, the girl's mother, claimed other kids in the neighbourhood told her the accused had lured her daughter away. When she went searching for her at the accused's home, she found her daughter screaming for help while the room was locked from inside. The accused fled, and his mother later misbehaved with the girl's mother, the complainant said.

Charges were framed against the accused and his mother on March 1, 2024. The two denied charges and sought a trial. Prosecution presented six witnesses, including the complainant and her daughter, while defence came up with two witnesses.

Special public prosecutor Satish Kumar Sharma argued that the incident was proven beyond doubt by the statement of the minor, which was corroborated by her mother, while the defence questioned the absence of a medical report and deliberate refusal of internal examination of the girl by the complainant.

Having heard both sides, the court concluded that the girl's statements about the events of the incident bear a clear consistency.

"In her cross-examination, the girl stated that the accused threatened and drove away her friends and dragged her into a room. The accused and her mother had a fight, which occurred after the accused's assault on her. She stated that she went to the police station the same night after the incident and that she was not injured.

AAP Wave Sweeps Punjab Local Body Polls; Congress, BJP and Akali Dal Suffer Major Setback

Chandigarh:The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has registered a resounding victory in Punjab's local body elections, delivering a significant political blow to the opposition. The election results indicate a strong endorsement of the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, as voters overwhelmingly backed AAP candidates across the state. AAP Emerges as the Dominant Force According to the official results released by the Election Commission, elections were held for a total of 1,616 municipal wards across Punjab. Of these, AAP secured 803 seats,

accounting for nearly half of all wards and establishing itself as the clear frontrunner in local governance. The impressive performance has enabled the ruling party to strengthen its hold over several municipal bodies and urban local institutions across the state. Congress Trails Far Behind The Congress Party finished in second place but remained significantly behind AAP in terms of seat count. The party managed to win 321 seats, highlighting its continued struggle to regain political ground in Punjab. BJP and Akali Dal Face Tough Verdict The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failed to

make a major impact in both urban and rural regions of Punjab, securing only 114 seats. The results are being viewed as a disappointing outcome for the party's efforts to expand its footprint in the state. Meanwhile, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) also endured a poor performance, reflecting the continuing challenges faced by the once-dominant regional political force. Strong Mandate for Governance and Change Political observers believe the results indicate that Punjab voters have once again expressed confidence in AAP's governance model and its promises of development and



administrative reforms. The outcome suggests that a significant section of the electorate preferred continuity and change-oriented politics over traditional party structures. The landslide victory has triggered celebrations among AAP workers and supporters across Punjab, who see the results as another major endorsement of the party's growing influence in the state.

3 held for Rs 26L insurance-bond cyber fraud run through fake call centre

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Cyber crime police arrested three men for allegedly running a fake investment and insurance scam through a call centre and duping people of lakhs of rupees by luring them into bogus insurance policies and govt bond schemes.

Police identified the accused as Udit Chopra (31), Jitesh Kumar Srivastava (34) and Himanshu Premi alias Sardar (32), all originally from Delhi and currently residing in Ghaziabad.

According to police, the trio cheated a resident of nearly Rs 26 lakh by posing as representatives of One Server Capital Advice LLP and convincing him to invest in insurance policies and govt bonds.

The case was registered at cyber crime police station, Manesar, on Jan 21 after the victim filed a complaint alleging he had been defrauded.

Investigators found that Himanshu and

Jitesh had worked with an insurance company in Ghaziabad and allegedly used company data to identify and contact potential targets. Police said the two later



set up a call centre from where callers misled victims into investing in fake schemes. Udit was allegedly hired to make

fraudulent calls. During investigation, police traced the cheated amount to a bank account from where cash was withdrawn through ATM and cheque transactions.

Police said two accused — Shyam and Arjun Singh — accused of withdrawing money through ATMs, were arrested earlier on May 6. Dharmendra Singh, accused of arranging SIM cards, and Amit Kumar Yadav alias Satyam, accused of withdrawing cash, were arrested from Uttar Pradesh on May 8.

Police recovered 13 mobile phones, seven SIM cards and ₹50,000 cash from the three accused arrested in Ghaziabad on May 25. Jitesh and Himanshu were remanded to three days' police custody, while Udit was sent to judicial custody. Further investigation is underway.

Should co's Yamuna mining lease be cancelled? NGT seeks report from Ghaziabad authorities

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The National Green Tribunal has directed the state environmental impact assessment authority (SEIAA) and the Ghaziabad district magistrate to examine whether the environmental clearance granted to a company mining sand on the Yamuna riverbed near Loni be cancelled, following repeated allegations of violation of mining norms.

A 3-quorum comprising Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi, A. Senthil Vel, and Afroz Ahmad, in an order dated May 18, said the authorities have to take the decision after taking into consideration 23 incidents of illegal mining.

The matter was brought to the NGT by a resident of Pachyara village, Bittu, who alleged the company, New Panther Security Guard Services, was mining sand beyond the area leased to them. "I had filed the complaint in 2023, seeking cancellation of the company's

environmental clearance because of mining violations. Apart from



overmining, they have also used mechanised and semi-mechanised machinery in riverbed mining. I had also

submitted video and photographic evidence to support," he said.

NGT directed the authorities to probe into the allegations and take appropriate action after hearing both the applicant and the company. An official from the Ghaziabad administration meanwhile said fines of Rs 50,000 and Rs 5 lakh had been imposed on the violators. While the company appealed against the action in the Supreme Court, it was referred back to the NGT again.

We will shortly file a report before the tribunal on whether to withdraw environmental clearance. In Panchayara, which has a 12-hectare riverbank area, 8 hectares have been legally allocated for mining for a five-year term to lessee," said the official. The NGT took suo motu cognisance of an article published in , titled "How sand miners laid road across Yamuna between Delhi and Ghaziabad" on Nov 30, 2024.

Courts crippled without records, trials face delay, July dates for litigants

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Gurgaon: From 50-100 cases on a normal day, the number of cases a court can hear has come down to barely 10-15 as logistical challenges and practical problems of not having access to servers and records cripple judicial work in the city after Sunday's fire severely damaged the main court complex.

Hearings scheduled in ongoing cases are being pushed to dates in July as the courts, now functioning from rooms in the PWD guesthouse, take up only urgent cases. Destruction of records in the fire, which damaged Ahlmad rooms, are also likely to delay cases that are at final stage of trial, lawyers said on Thursday. Reconstruction of records would be different challenge altogether as parties involved in old cases might not be available, according to these lawyers.

The judicial complex in the old city was constructed in 1975 and orders are available online only from 2014. Pre-2014 orders do not have digital records and were preserved in physical form in records room that the fire has damaged. The current state of these records isn't

known. If the fire has destroyed them, it will affect old cases as well as impair lawyers' and judges' ability to refer to them when needed. "Orders before 2014 are not available online. When we need any old order for reference, we exhibit it before the court after getting a copy from the record room," said advocate Mayank Raghav, wondering how such copies will now be sourced. The fire began in the basement and first damaged the record room before spreading to large parts of the complex and damaging 21 courtrooms as well as judges' retiring chambers.

A court can issue notice to parties involved and ask them to submit records available with them. "This provision will be used to reconstruct records. But it has its limitations. For cases which are 30, 40 or 50 years old, it is highly likely that parties and lawyers might not be available now," said advocate Manish Shandilya.

A temporary institution room has been set up inside the damaged court complex for filing of new cases after the fire, but only urgent matters are admitted. "Those like arrest of accused by police,



bail application and stay appeals are being admitted," said advocate Sunder Singh. Gurgaon has a total of 72 courts, including 10 sessions courts, a commercial court, a fast-track court for sexual assault cases, two family courts, two labour courts and a juvenile court. Of these, 64 courts operate in Gurgaon city, while Sohna and Pataudi have four courts each. The labour court, which

operates from mini-secretariat and the juvenile court, which is housed in the agriculture department building, are the only ones among city courts that are not touched by the fire.

For litigants, the impact is both financial and emotional. Delays mean more visits, more adjournments and higher legal costs. Criminal trials in serious offences, including murder, rape, narcotics, and cases of sexual assault against children will feel the slowdown most acutely.

On an average, 12,000 to 15,000 cases are filed in a month in Gurgaon. At present, 3.06 lakh cases are pending before courts in the city, of which 2.62 lakh are criminal cases. A K Raghav, retired district and sessions judge, said ultimately litigants will suffer due to the fire and subsequent damage. "Cases will linger on. Whether it is due to lawyers' strike or fire, any disruption in court work impacts the litigant the most," said Raghav. He said setting up of a temporary court in the PWD guesthouse has ensured continuity of judicial work.

Amritsar parking dispute turns violent; AAP leader, another person shot at

The altercation began when the AAP leader, Jaipal Singh Bau, had parked his vehicle outside the residence of the retired police officer, Tejinder Singh.

Amritsar. (Agency)

A local AAP leader and two others got shot after a parking disagreement between the families' of the party leader and a retired police officer turned violent in Kot Atma Ram, Amritsar, on Thursday afternoon. The altercation began when the AAP leader, Jaipal Singh Bau, had parked his vehicle outside the residence of the retired police officer, Tejinder Singh. Tejinder objected to the parking sparking a verbal confrontation that quickly turned physical. During the initial scuffle, Jaipal's son struck the retired officer, knocking off his turban before leaving the scene, said Amritsar SP (East) Devendra Singh.



Later, the party leader's son returned again with his father and a brother — the group

reportedly armed with a kirpan (ceremonial sword) and a pistol.

What followed was a second, more violent confrontation. Both sides allegedly opened fire at each other injuring Narendra Singh, associated with Tejinder's group, and also Jaipal Singh. The injured, hit in their legs, were rushed to hospital.

Police confirmed their conditions are stable and not life-threatening. The AAP MLA from the South constituency, Inderbir Singh Nijjar, visited the Amandeep Hospital to check on Jaipal's condition.

I was informed about the firing in my constituency and that senior party volunteer Jaipal Singh had been hospitalised," Nijjar said. "Doctors have been consulted regarding the patients'

condition, and the matter is being thoroughly investigated."

Nijjar clarified that no political motive has been established so far. "The truth will emerge after the police investigation."

The councillor from Ward No 47, Varpal Singh Babbar, who described Jaipal as a close associate, confirmed that the dispute originated over parking and alleged there had been an attempt to attack Jaipal Singh's son during the melee. B-Division police officer Baljinder Singh Aulakh confirmed that statements are being recorded from both parties and that CCTV footage from the area is under review. "Further action will be taken based on the findings."

Short news

Norwester batters Odisha's Bonai, power infrastructure bears brunt

ROURKELA. (Agency)

A powerful norwester left a trail of destruction in major parts of Bonai sub-division in Sundargarh district, causing massive damage to power infrastructure on Wednesday evening.

The Bonai sub-divisional headquarters was the worst affected with power supply yet to be restored even 24 hours after the storm. Given the scale of damage to power supply networks, sources said the wait for return to normalcy is likely to be longer.

Junior engineer of Tata Power Western Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPWODL) for Bonai and Gurundia blocks Soyam Sahu said around 50 11 kV and low transmission poles besides eight distribution transformers were damaged during the norwester. Massive damage to 11 kV and 33 kV feeder lines at Bonai, Tuniapali and Gurundia caused by uprooting of trees was also reported.

Sahu said restoration work was underway on war-footing from Wednesday night but it may take longer than expected. Approximately, around 20,000 consumers were affected due to the storm and they continue to be without power, he added.

Similarly, TPWODL JE for Lahunipada and Koida blocks Dehabrata Sethi said around 10,000 consumers were affected. Around 30-40 per cent damage to feeder lines was reported at Lahunipada block headquarters, Tumkela, Gamlei, Lalei, Birtola, Kekra, Darjing, Chandiposh, Lutharbam, Roxy, K Balang, Kapanda and other areas.

Rs 237 crore per acre: Raidurg scripts Hyderabad realty milestone

HYDERABAD. (Agency)

The mega e-auction of prime land conducted by the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Limited (TGIIC) in the prestigious Knowledge City layout at Raidurg Panmaktha in Serilingampally on Thursday shattered all previous records, fetching Rs 1,490.73 crore for 6.29 acres at a staggering Rs 237 crore per acre. This surpassed the auction of land at Raidurg in October 2025, in which an acre of land had fetched Rs 177 crore. The transaction marked a further increase of 34 per cent, thereby setting a new benchmark for land pricing in Hyderabad.

Gowra Ventures Private Limited, which emerged as the successful bidder, plans to develop a new IT office tower.

Another prime land parcel measuring 5.09 acres (24,672 square yards) in Survey No 83/1 in the same locality is scheduled for auction on June 1. The TGIIC has fixed an upset price of Rs 139 crore per acre, with bid increments of Rs 1 crore per acre or multiples thereof. Officials expressed confidence that the upcoming auction could also witness bids crossing Rs 235 crore per acre. They said the sustained demand for land in Raidurg underlines Hyderabad's rise as a premier destination for IT and real estate investments.

Knowledge City has emerged as a major growth hub alongside Hitec City, Madhapur, Gachibowli, Kokapet, Financial District and Nanakramguda. The area is witnessing rapid development of commercial towers, office spaces, shopping centres and premium residential projects.

Unpaid ASHA workers, ambulances stalled: Is Maharashtra's public health system running on credit?

Mumbai. (Agency)

Maharashtra recently raised concerns with the Union Health Ministry over delays in the release of National Health Mission (NHM) funds, with state officials telling the Centre during a meeting this week that pending dues have crossed Rs 1,800 crore over the last two financial years. Officials said the delays were now straining public healthcare operations across the state.

According to sources, approximately Rs 800-840 crore from 2024-25 remains pending, while in 2025-26, over Rs 1,058 crore is yet to be released. The issue came up during a meeting held in New Delhi on May 26, where Maharashtra officials presented the state's annual Project Implementation Plan (PIP) to the Union Health Ministry and flagged the continuing delays in release of central



funds.

Under the National Health Mission (NHM) — the Centre's flagship programme that funds a significant part of India's public healthcare delivery system, including maternal healthcare, rural outreach services, ASHA workers, ambulance networks and contractual medical staff — states submit annual PIPs outlining funding requirements, healthcare targets and implementation plans.

Gujarat woman killed in knife attack during 'attempted robbery' in Canada

Vadodara. (Agency)

Vidhi Medha's family last spoke to her over a video call on May 14. For nearly two weeks, they tried reaching out to Vidhi, who had moved to Canada for education four years ago, from their home in Borsad in Gujarat's Anand district. Neither did their phone calls get through, nor were their texts 'delivered'.

On Wednesday afternoon, her anxious parents learned that Vidhi was stabbed to death during an attempted robbery in Canada's Niagara region on May 15.

Vidhi, 22, died on the spot after she was allegedly attacked with a knife in the city of St. Catharines on May 15, according to Niagara police. However, she fought her attacker and injured him, her father



Kalpesh Medha said, citing district officials and police.

"We were told that she (Vidhi) was stabbed to death on the spot... But she tried her best to fight back and save herself. She succumbed to severe injuries, but she also injured her attacker..." According to her family, Vidhi was pursuing business management in Hamilton, a port city in

Officials said many healthcare schemes and projects approved under earlier PIPs are now continuing as "carry-forward liabilities" — unpaid dues from previous years that have spilled into the current financial year because committed funds are yet to be fully released.

"Overall, the delay in fund flow has crossed Rs 1,800 crore, creating enormous financial pressure across Maharashtra under the NHM," a senior official said. A state official told The Indian Express, "We have raised and submitted all our concerns before the Centre during the May 26 meeting. Yes, funds have been pending for the last two years. Many ongoing healthcare projects and schemes sanctioned under previous PIPs are now continuing as carry-forward liabilities. The funds we are demanding this year include projects already sanctioned."

Canada's Ontario province, while also working part-time to support herself. She had also enrolled in a "personal support worker" (PSW) honours course. They said she had moved to St. Catharines just 15 days before the incident. Vidhi's father said the family thought that their daughter might have gone away on an 'excursion' and, therefore, was unreachable. "We used to speak once every few days over video calls, but she promptly replied to text messages... When we kept trying to contact her and the text messages went undelivered, we thought she may have gone on some excursion somewhere without connectivity, but we were anxious... We had no idea about what happened to our daughter," Kalpesh said, struggling to hold back his tears.

Lions in 10-km radius of affected areas isolated: Gujarat minister after deaths of cubs

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Amid deaths of lion cubs from suspected 'Babesia' infection, big cats residing within 10-km radius of affected areas in Gir Somnath and Amreli districts in Gujarat are being isolated to prevent any potential spread, state Forest Minister Arjun Modhwadia said on Thursday.

Samples of lion cubs that were found dead from suspected infection have been sent to Gujarat Biotechnological Research Centre in Gandhinagar for examination and the results are awaited, he added.

Modhwadia also indicated that currently the lions suspected to be affected are being treated as per the symptoms they show.

The minister had earlier said that the lion cubs have died of suspected infection caused by Babesia parasite in the Gir region.

In an official video statement, on Thursday, Modhwadia said that following the deaths, "...the forest department has swung into action and samples of the dead lions have been sent to Gujarat Biotechnological Research Centre in Gandhinagar."

He added that the office of Prime Minister is also providing guidance in the matter. "Currently, doctors of Junagadh Veterinary College, our frontline staff and other senior officers have collectively isolated lions in a 10-km area so that the possible virus infection does not spread elsewhere," Modhwadia said. He also said that all possible preventive measures are being taken.

"However, the forest department has already made all advance plans to meet any emergency situation. Medical and logistical arrangements have been strengthened at the hospital.

If any lion is found affected by Babesia, a fleet is ready to rescue it on an immediate basis," it said. For this, various types of cages, nets and necessary equipment have been kept ready, it said.

A 'tranquilliser gun' and its accurate dosage have been kept ready to render the lion unconscious and bring it to a safe place, the statement said. The latest equipment is available in the hospital's advanced lab for reporting and diagnosis of the lion, it added.

Mohali MC Polls | 50% reservation for women: all eyes on whether they get Mayor, deputy posts

With the reservation policy in place, at least 25 women councillors are set to enter the Municipal Corporation House.

Mohali. (Agency)

The political atmosphere in Mohali has reached a fever pitch with the counting of the votes beginning at 8 am on Friday, for the declaration of Mohali Municipal Corporation election results, with early trends expected soon after. The civic polls are not being viewed merely as a battle for local governance, but also as a political "semi-final" ahead of the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections.

In the 50-ward Mohali Municipal Corporation, the race for the Mayor's post has emerged as the biggest talking point.

The most significant and historic aspect of this year's civic polls is the implementation of 50 per cent reservation for women. With the reservation policy in place, at least 25 women councillors are set to enter the Municipal Corporation House. The attention is now on whether women will also secure equal representation in the three

key leadership positions of Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Political observer Ish Kumar believes that the outcome could mark a major shift in Mohali's local political landscape. Opposition parties have already raised questions over ward reservation and delimitation, adding further political significance to the elections. Another political observer, Bhagwant Singh Bedi, says that at least 26 councillors' support will be required for any party or alliance to secure the Mayor's chair. As a result, a fierce contest is being witnessed among the AAP, Congress and Independent candidates. Bedi says that a strong performance by the AAP would signal the party's continued dominance in Punjab, while for Congress, the elections are being seen as a crucial test to retain its urban support base. Since Mohali's MLA also



belongs to the AAP, the legislator's vote in the mayoral election is expected to play a significant role.

The elections have also drawn attention because of several high-profile contests across key wards. In Ward No 10, Congress leader Kanwarbir Singh Sidhu is locked in a triangular contest against AAP's Satyajeet Kundra and Independent candidate Parmjit Singh Kahlon. Sidhu is also being viewed in political circles as a

potential mayoral face for Congress.

Kanwarbir is the son of former minister Balbir Singh Sidhu and nephew of former Mayor Amarjit Singh Jeeti Sidhu. In Ward No 42, the political prestige of Sarabjit Singh Samana, son of Mohali MLA Kulwant Singh, is at stake.

Meanwhile, Ward No 6 has become another closely watched seat, where AAP's Sunny Ahluwalia is facing former Deputy Mayor Manjit Singh Sethi in a direct contest, says Bhagwant.

The polling held on May 26 recorded an estimated voter turnout of around 55 to 60 per cent. Despite intense summer heat, voters participated enthusiastically, although reports of slow polling and minor political tensions surfaced from some areas. The district administration has made elaborate arrangements for the counting process. A total of eight counting centres were set up across Mohali.

Hawks prepare ground for a cruel summer in Kyiv

The revamped western narrative of the Ukraine war is that the Russian military juggernaut is being brought to a halt. It parodies that the war has lasted longer than the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany. The summer months will show what lies in the womb of time.

The western commentators attribute this 'reversal of fortunes' to the fast-improving Ukrainian drone capabilities. Ukraine strikes oil infrastructure and military targets deep inside Russia while its AI drone hunters scatter enemy soldiers who slip past infantry positions along the 950-km frontline, honing new counterattacking tactics that combine drone and infantry, and creates grey zones that neither army fully controls. The Kremlin cannot take it anymore. It played the Oreshnik card finally on Sunday night and is contemplating a full-court display of Russian military prowess through the summer months after waiting in vain like the tramps in Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*, for two businessmen to arrive from Washington once they're done with the Iran issue. Ukraine has gained an advantage in drone-led grey-zone warfare—superior in numbers, software and satellite intelligence—which significantly impacts the military balance. Russian advances are the slowest so far this year. One sign that the war has entered a new phase is that President Vladimir Putin signalled he would be ready to meet directly with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Suffice it to say that the Kremlin has been eager to settle the war, but multiple factors have posed obstacles. Principally, Zelenskyy is more fixated than ever, nudged no doubt by the Europeans, on his conviction that the war is on a razor's edge and Russia can be defeated. Arguably, even if Washington were to twist Zelenskyy's arms, he would choose to sit out the Trump presidency, as indeed what the Europeans are doing. Ukraine has been publicly sour on US mediation, which sets up Kyiv and Moscow for an even more protracted war.

The EU plans to give €90 billion to Kyiv to keep its head above the waterline. Flushed with funds, Zelenskyy may lose all appetite for negotiations. The Russians, realising the futility of pressuring him, are switching tack. The "spirit of Anchorage", generated by the high-stakes meeting between the US President Donald Trump and Putin in Alaska last August, has evaporated. Meanwhile, the facts on the ground are that the Trump administration has decreased the volume of aid it gives to Ukraine but still sells weapons via Nato, and provides Kyiv with satellite intelligence support.

Munich-based Quantum Frontline issued a press release last month announcing completion of the first batch of production of the battle-proven Linza drone systems "to ensure consistent, scalable output for the armed forces of Ukraine". The same month, the Netherlands signed a contract with Ukrainian companies to produce 600,000 drones as part of a new €175-million aid package. Aviation Week reported that Britain's uncrewed aircraft systems manufacturers, including Malloy Aeronautics, Tekever and Windracers, are among the suppliers to benefit from a UK plan to provide 120,000 long-range strike drones for Ukraine this year. Clearly, the Europeans are striving for escalation dominance. The proxy war is in danger of transforming as a direct EU/Nato confrontation with Russia. Neither Europeans nor Americans seem very much concerned about Ukraine's future, although the narrative would still have us believe that Kyiv is gaining the "upper hand", thanks to its superior drone technology. Actually, it is the EU that is putting this escalation on an aggressive footing, while itself transitioning as a sort of menagerie of metaphysical monsters supplying long-range drones on an industrial scale to Ukraine.

Nehru's legacy of science & right to question

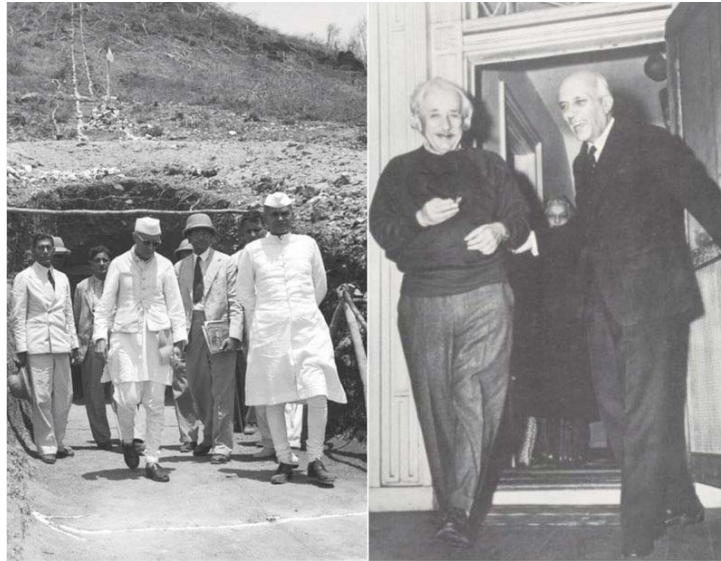
Scientific temper refers to a way of thinking rather than a specialised body of knowledge

Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution to Indian science and technology was not merely administrative; it was deeply philosophical and transformative. When India had just emerged from colonial rule, it was economically fragile and scientifically underdeveloped. Nehru recognised that true independence required both intellectual and technological self-reliance. He placed science at the centre of nation-building, believing that only a scientific approach could address India's pressing problems. These included poverty, hunger and backwardness. Nehru's most enduring contribution was promoting scientific temper. He first explained this term in his well-known book, *The Discovery of India*, published in 1946. Scientific temper can be defined as a way of thinking and acting in social settings using scientific methods. These may include posing questions, observing physical reality, testing hypotheses, hypothesising, analysing and communicating inferences, not always in this order. Ultimately, scientific temper describes an attitude that involves using logical reasoning.

This should not be mistaken for merely inculcating technological and scientific expertise or building infrastructure in science and technology; rather, the development of a scientific temper among the country's masses is a philosophical and pedagogical objective.

For instance, India has achieved great success after Independence in the field of science and technology, as evidenced by milestones ranging from acquiring atomic power to the low-budget yet highly successful Mangalyaan mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation and the huge IT revolution it has driven. Scientific temper refers to a way of thinking or a viewpoint rather than a specialised body of knowledge.

It addresses the broader scope of human life rather than to narrow, specialised questions of scientific research and application. Unlike scientific expertise alone, the project of scientific temper is a call for the diffusion of scientific inquiry in the thoughts of the huge population of this country. The growth of scientific temper should be measured by the extent to which ordinary people use the methods of science in dealing with issues in their own lives. Through the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1976, 'scientific temper' was added to the list of Fundamental Duties of every Indian citizen vide Part IV-A, Article 51-A (h): 'to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.'



India's journey into space science, eventually evolving into one of the world's most successful space programmes.

Nehru also ensured that science was integrated into economic planning. Through the Five-Year Plans, he linked scientific research with agriculture, industry and infrastructure, making technology a tool for national transformation rather than an isolated pursuit. Investment in research and development increased significantly during his tenure, reflecting the seriousness with which the state approached scientific advancement. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Nehru's legacy is that he did not view science as an elite activity confined

to experts. He saw it as a civilisational shift — a way of thinking that would liberate society from superstition and stagnation. His famous description of laboratories, dams and institutions as the "temples of modern India" symbolised this belief that progress must be rooted in knowledge and innovation. The spirit of inquiry and the acceptance of the right to question and be questioned are fundamental to scientific temper.

It calls upon one to ask the how, the what, and the why of an object, event or phenomenon. It further calls upon one to exercise the right to question, provided, of course, the questioning of an existing theory, hypothesis, or statement, or social situation is done in accordance with the scientific method and is not merely a bare assertion of one's belief. Scientific temper is, therefore, incompatible

with the acceptance of all kinds of authority figures or high priests who may not be questioned. It leads to the realisation that events occur as a result of the interplay of understandable and describable natural and social forces and not because someone, however great, so ordained them. These forces are often complex and intertwined and have to be analytically disentangled. It is the hard reality that we, unfortunately, project science merely as a body of knowledge. But science is more. Science is primarily a set of methods, a toolkit that we use to generate knowledge. In the method of science, we make observations and experiments and use evidence, logic and internal consistency to make decisions. More importantly, we are allowed to question and re-question everything. There is no final authority and no final answer. Science is thus always a work in progress; all answers are tentative and can be called into question at any time and by anybody.

This is the method of science, but this is not what we are projecting as science. We do not teach the scientific method in our schools. Instead, we burden our children with fact after fact, we burden their backs with bags full of books containing facts, but we do not tell them how we came to know all these facts, or indeed any fact. Today, India's achievements in engineering, space exploration and scientific research are built upon the foundations laid during Nehru's era. His vision ensured that India did not remain a passive consumer of technology but began its journey towards becoming a creator of knowledge. In that sense, Nehru's contribution to science and technology was not just about institutions or policies — it was about shaping the intellectual direction of a nation.

Reservation reset : Benefits must reach the truly marginalised

Social justice cannot become hereditary privilege

THE Supreme Court's recent observation questioning whether children of highly privileged officials should continue availing themselves of reservation benefits deserves thoughtful engagement. The court has raised a necessary question: should affirmative action continue benefiting relatively advanced families while many among the most deprived remain excluded? Reservation remains indispensable in India because caste and poverty continue to overlap sharply. According to multidimensional poverty estimates, a vast majority of India's poor belong to SC, ST and OBC communities. Historical exclusion from land ownership, education, dignified employment and social mobility has left deep structural inequalities that cannot be wished away through rhetoric about merit alone. Yet the Supreme Court is equally right in recognising that these communities are not homogeneous. In the Davinder Singh judgment, the court acknowledged that some sub-castes remain significantly more backward and



underrepresented than others. Then Chief Justice BR Gavai also cautioned that relatively advanced sections within reserved categories were cornering a disproportionate share of quota benefits, leaving the

"weakest of the weak" behind. This is the heart of the debate. Social justice cannot become hereditary privilege. The child of an impoverished Dalit labourer in a remote village does not begin life from the same position as the child of senior civil servants, professionals or politically influential families, even if both belong to reserved categories. Access to elite schooling, urban networks, financial stability and institutional familiarity creates undeniable advantages.

None of this weakens the case for reservation. Rather, it strengthens the argument for refining it so that benefits penetrate deeper into communities still trapped in deprivation. The objective should not be to dilute affirmative action, but to democratise it within the marginalised themselves. A policy designed to uplift the disadvantaged must constantly ask who remains the most disadvantaged today.

Medical education needs a clean-up

The NEET scam has given the govt another opportunity to do course correction

INDIA's medical education sector is in a mess. The National Testing Agency (NTA) recently cancelled the National Entrance and Eligibility Test (NEET), which it had conducted for admission to medical colleges, following a question paper leak. In July last year, the Central Bureau of Investigation uncovered a large-scale corruption scandal allegedly involving several medical colleges and officials of the Health Ministry as well as the National Medical Commission (NMC). All such instances raise serious concerns about the integrity of medical education as a whole and its impact on the quality of healthcare delivery. The sector needs an overhaul, not minor tinkering.

Becoming a doctor in India is a tough process. Students need to compete for a medical seat. The number of seats has gone up substantially in recent years — it stands at 128,000 MBBS seats spread over 800 colleges. Another 50,000 undergraduate and post-graduate seats would be added over the next three years, as per the government's plan. Still, the competition is high. Some 22 lakh children appeared in the now-cancelled NEET. If selected, one has to go through five-and-a-half years of training in a medical college, and three years of specialisation in a residency programme (after taking another entrance test). Since the NEET score is the sole criterion for admission in the present system, the integrity of this examination is critical. Therefore, the debate after the current fiasco has focused on the NTA and ways to ensure the integrity of the system. Various technological and physical means being suggested include computer-based testing, security systems like encrypted 'just-in-time' question papers, multiple sets of question papers and randomised AI-driven selection of questions. The K Radhakrishnan Committee, formed after the 2024 NEET scam, had also made several

recommendations to make the test foolproof.

Such technological quick-fixes and measures to ensure the physical security of test papers may be helpful in the short term. The process of medical college admission needs fundamental structural changes. Standardised tests determine admission to all levels of medical training in India, unlike the system of holistic assessment followed in many countries. Score-based admission is not the best way to assess the suitability of students for medical training; it is inequitable in many ways. NEET is structured around the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus as well as some topics that go beyond the school syllabus. Children from non-CBSE schools that follow the state board syllabus have an inherent disadvantage.

Even those coming from CBSE schools are not fully prepared because there are topics not covered by school subjects. To bridge the gap, both sets of students have to undergo some sort of preparation for NEET. And this has given rise to the multi-billion-dollar coaching industry. It has created another barrier for many students as they can't afford high coaching fees. It is a double disadvantage if they are from schools following the state board curriculum, and from non-English-medium schools. To begin with, the admission process needs to be decentralised. For a country with diverse educational systems and regional disparities, a "one size fits all" approach like NEET is not effective. Such a standardised assessment test does not account for diverse learning environments and student backgrounds. In addition, a centralised system is more vulnerable to scams, manipulation and paper leaks, as seen in 2024 and 2026. Let states decide their own process for admission based on local factors, while ensuring accountability and transparency of the process

they choose. It could be a hybrid system based on high school marks and entrance test scores for admission to government medical colleges or a separate eligibility test for private colleges. There could be additional criteria or test for admission to the "all-India" quota in state colleges. The nature of medical admission tests has to change. At present, NEET is basically a rote framework based on the syllabus of biology, physics



and chemistry. It is not designed to assess preparedness, aptitude or academic potential for a higher education course like medicine. Students should be assessed more for critical thinking and reasoning, problem-solving skills as well as behavioural and social science concepts. For post-graduate seats too, it is inadequate to have a purely score-based admission test.

An undesirable byproduct of NEET is the coaching industry, which has invariably figured in every NEET-related scandal. The very nature of the test and diverse learning backgrounds of students have given rise to this industry. Coaching institutes claim that for an average

high school student to excel in NEET, he/she should start preparing as early as the sixth or seventh grade, which is almost seven years before a student appears for NEET. For this, they create dummy schools and intermediate colleges where students are enrolled formally but have to spend most of their time in coaching centres. Thus, the coaching industry is not only undermining the formal schooling system but also turning children into NEET zombies, depriving them of the essential learning experience of high school and junior college life. These children lose out on critical thinking, ethics and communication skills — necessary for the development of their overall personality, irrespective of their career paths. In addition, the stress of coaching and parental expectations is taking a heavy toll on the mental health of youngsters.

Dummy schooling is thriving as state education departments have turned a blind eye. Instead of discouraging the coaching industry, states encourage it. In Rajasthan, the government provides financial assistance to students from underprivileged classes to attend coaching sessions. Subsidies are directly transferred to coaching institutes. The Telangana government has tied up with coaching companies to provide educational material and digital tools to students preparing for NEET and other competitive exams. In effect, state governments are helping the coaching industry replace learning with rote training.

The latest NEET scam has provided another opportunity to the government to clean up the mess in the medical education sector and introduce reforms. All the institutions involved, be it the NTA, NMC or medical colleges, need to be made accountable, transparent and corruption-free.

TIME TO Treat your Tootsies

Going sans pedicure during winter is no big deal as your feet are usually covered. But this is the season when you end up wearing strappy sandals, exposing your feet to the scorching



heat and elements that be. Not only are you exposing your tootsies to pollutants galore, it's also a time when sweat and grime can make a heady cocktail and lead to blisters — never a pretty sight. Here's what all you could do... Happy feet, happy you For well-kept feet, you don't need to spend a bomb on salon pedicures. It's easy to get happy feet at home... Always keep your feet clean. This will avoid problems like smelly feet, fungal infection or eczema. Wash your feet thoroughly as soon as you get home, and pat them dry. Moisturize daily.

Scrub your feet once or twice a week to get rid of tanning and dead cells. To prepare natural scrub, mix together 2 tsp sugar, 1 tsp lemon juice and 1 tsp coconut oil. Apply the scrub all over your feet and gently massage for 3-4 minutes till the sugar granules get dissolved. Wash it off with water. Use foot powder before putting on socks to avoid smelly feet. Wear cotton socks, as it absorbs sweat better. Use sunscreen before going out, especially when wearing open footwear. Keep toe nails clean and trimmed. Cut the

nails straight to avoid ingrown nails. Weekend foot ritual In a bucket, fill lukewarm water, some rose petals and raw milk. Soak your feet in it. Raw milk contains lactic acid which exfoliates the skin and milk proteins provide nourishment. After soaking for 10 minutes, massage feet with rose petals. Wash with water and pat dry. Finish by applying a heavy-duty moisturizer.

8 Benefits of Rose water



The delicate rose has so much more to it than just its beauty and fragrance. An essential component of various beauty products and regimens, its derivative, rose water, has as many benefits. A look at few of them...

1. It helps in softening the skin by hydrating, moisturising and revitalising it.
2. Its antioxidant properties helps strengthen skin cells and regenerate skin tissues. It also keeps wrinkles aside.
3. Its moisturising and nourishing properties help in enhancing one's quality of hair. In addition to this, it helps treat dandruff and slight scalp inflammations.
4. Before Indians used medicated eye drops, it has often been used to clean and soothe one's eyes. Also, it helps prevent and cure dark circles and puffiness around the eyes.
5. It helps in treating skin rashes caused due to the scorching heat. Spraying it helps relieve sunburns and itchy skin.
6. Adding few drops of rose water to your regular creams can be used for its moisturising properties
7. It can also be used as a cleanser to get rid of the dirt and dead skin off your face.
8. Finally, it can be used to treat acne. Mix lemon juice and rose water in equal quantities, apply it and keep it on for half an hour before finally cleaning it with water helps reduce acne. Following this regime for two to three weeks creates visible effects in reducing scars and blemishes.



The rainy season may fall gently on your window pane, but it's far from being kind to your hair. In fact, it is during the monsoon season that hair gets dry and brittle and more susceptible to breakage. But a spa need not always be a solution to regaining hair health back. With a few of these home-made masks, your tresses will regain their bounce and shine.

1) Banana-coconut milk mask:

For hair softness Bananas are known to have immense value to your diet, but this time try them on your scalp, too. Mashed with a tablespoon of coconut milk, they add shine and softness to your hair. Apply the mask for about 20 minutes and rinse off.

2) Avocado-olive oil mask: To hydrate the hair

Ripe avocados are just what you need to nourish the hair. Mix this with a little olive oil in a bowl and leave it on the hair to revitalise it. Apply this and leave it on for half an hour and wash off with warm water.

3) Papaya-hibiscus: For split ends

Mash some ripe papaya (without the skin). Add some hibiscus juice to this. Apply the paste on your hair.



Try these

Hair mask

to beat hair problems in the monsoon

Rinse off with warm water. 4) Curry leaves mask: To stop hair loss Suffering from falling hair? Use curry leaves to help. The leaves are packed with beta-carotene and proteins and have vitamin B, which restores colour to the hair by strengthening the roots. Boil the leaves with your hair oil. Let it cool a little. Apply and wash off.



Night Cream

can delay ageing!

all fall prey to lavish advertising of beauty products that claim to make you look younger. But, whether these products are actually useful or not is something we all need to know. One such product is a night cream.

After keeping a safe distance from all such beauty products for decades, I started my beauty regime with a day and a night cream, thanks to the sudden presence of pores on my face. But one thing that confused me always was, if we really need a special 'night cream' or is it just a result of growing market for extravagant beauty products? Contrary to what I thought, experts say, IT IS IMPORTANT!

"Night Care is about rejuvenating your skin and reversing the damage done to it during the day. In other words, if Day Care is about defence, Night Care is about the attack," says Dr. Jamuna Pai, the celebrity beauty expert.

Why is nighttime so important?

"Since our skin is not exposed to the environment at night, the focus should be on providing hydration and nourishment to the skin cells to help keep our skin rejuvenated and fresh. In addition, the skin also needs a serious boost to its metabolism and this can be

achieved with a night cream that contains effective performance ingredients. Retinol is one such ingredient because it penetrates deep into the dermis and evokes stimulation right where collagen fibers are created. It is considered to be one of the most miraculous ingredients for skin smoothing, reducing lines and wrinkles and reducing pore size," says Dr. Ramanjit Singh, Dermatologist, Medanta.

Aging, no matter how much you avoid paying attention, scares all of us. A simple skincare routine with few beauty products is a must to avoid these ageing signs. Night cream is one such important product. To understand this further, we first need to understand how our skin behaves while we are asleep!

Ahh! Now we know that all the efforts we did before hitting the bed, did not go in vain. But another question that breaks out here is - do all skin types need a night cream regime? Experts say that all skin types need a night

cream to replenish the damages done to the skin during the day time. "A Night cream hydrates and moisturises dry skin, it balances the oil and prevents acne in oily skin. And in balanced skin it maintains suppleness. Generally, for all skin types, the role of a night cream is to rejuvenate and repair," says Dr Kalpana Sarangi, Dermato-cosmetologist, Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital.

The right age to start your regime with night cream

25 is the new 35! If you think twenties are very early to realize that your skin needs care, you are wrong. With the worsening environmental conditions around us, the early you start, the longer you delay the onset of ageing.



"While the difference between the cell turnover rate in your teens to the time you are in your fifties is large, there are still ways you can speed up the turnover rate as you age. You can start either when or before you see the first signs of fine lines, dryness of the skin, mild pigmentation patches or Sun damage/photo ageing," recommends Dr. Jamuna Pai.

Moisturising is something that automatically becomes a part of a woman's routine, but most of us ignore the most important hours of the day. Even while we are asleep for 7-8 hours, our skin needs to be taken care of. Because of the evaporation process during the nighttime, our skin needs uninterrupted nourishment and thus, night creams come for rescue.

Look your best with crystal Make-up



A Makeup trend that women can swear by this season is crystal. We tell you how you can sport this look with elan...

For women who are high on bling, do not restrict yourself to clothes and accessories alone. Crystal make-up, which has been seen at the international as well as domestic runways this year, is high among current fashion charts.

Nishi Chatwani, makeup professional says, "While last few years have seen the rise of smokey eyes and blue eye shadows, this year is all about wearing shiny and crystalised make-up. And the best way to do it is by wearing it on your eyelids."

Three creative ways to wear this look

- Go for the smokey eye look. Instead of blending in the usual black eye shadow, take a small quantity of grey and blue to create a different colour combination.

- After you have applied the blush, you can take a few quantity of crystals (similar to eye crystals) and apply it on your cheeks. Make sure that you do not go overboard with it, since it can kill the look altogether.

- The recent runways have also had women showcasing crystal lips. To get the look, apply a dark shade of lip colour — red or mauve and apply crystals on it. However, this is one look that you can sport only during the night, since wearing it in the morning will make it look OTT.

Crystal eyes

- Before applying make-up, wash your face with a cream-based cleanser and pat dry.

- Take a generous amount of lotion (preferably aloe vera) and apply it on your face. Let it dry.

- Take a small quantity of primer and blend it on your face well.

- Next, instead of applying foundation, it is recommended that you apply compact powder. **Dust off the excess from your eyes.**

- Line your outer eyelids with black gel eyeliner. You can also apply kajal if you want. Take a small amount of shimmer and dust it on your eyelids. You can then take a few pieces of crystallised balls and stick it on the shimmer.

- Make sure that you dust off the shimmer and excess crystals from your face.

- To complement the eyes, make sure that you apply a lighter lip shade. Nudes and pinks look the best.

Easy remedies for Dark Circles



Tired of dark circles and want to get rid of them. Avoid chemically induced serums and gels, by using these interesting remedies, which can be prepared easily at home, to reduce dark circles naturally. Just be careful and avoid getting them into the eyes when applying it.

Rose water -

Soak two cotton balls in rose water and place them over the eyelids. Keep them for 10 minutes and then remove them.

Cucumber -

It is a known fact that cucumber has skin-lightening properties and

acts as a great astringent. Take a fresh green cucumber and cut it into thick slices. Chill them in the refrigerator. After half an hour, take them out and put them over closed eyes for 10 - 15 minutes. Wash off with normal water.

Tomato -

Tomato too acts as a great skin lightening agent. Take one teaspoon of fresh tomato juice mix it with one teaspoon of lemon juice. Gently apply the mixture around your eyes on the dark circles. After keeping it for around 10 minutes, wash it off with cold water.

Potato slices -

Peel and cut potato into thin slices. Immediately put them over closed eyes for 15-20 minutes. Wash off with normal water. Almond oil - Before going to bed every night, gently massage almond oil into the skin around your eyes.

Mint -

Crush six to seven fresh mint leaves and apply them around the eye. Keep it for around 10 - 15 minutes and then wash it off with cold water.



Air India, IndiGo cut 250 domestic flights; Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru worst hit

New Delhi.(Agency)
India's two largest airlines, IndiGo and Air India, along with Air India Express, are withdrawing around 250 daily domestic flights starting from June, as high fuel costs and softening travel demand put pressure on operations. The cuts, which are expected to continue through the summer months of June to August, come at a time when airfares have already risen sharply. The flight reductions are coming at a time when many families travel for summer vacations and leisure, potentially adding inconvenience during what is traditionally a peak holiday period for domestic tourism. Air India is reducing about 22% of its domestic schedule during June and July. The airline operates nearly 500 domestic flights a day and the reduction would mean roughly 110 fewer flights daily. IndiGo, which runs around 2,200 daily flights, is trimming its domestic capacity

by 5-7%, resulting in about 110 fewer flights per day. Meanwhile, Air India Express, a subsidiary of Air India Limited and a low-cost carrier (LCC) operating on an all-economy class model, is cutting nearly 10% of its roughly 340 daily domestic flights. **M U M B A I , D E L H I , B E N G A L U R U W O R S T H I T B Y F L I G H T C U T S** Specific routes facing cuts include several high-traffic sectors. Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru are among the worst hit. As major hubs, these cities see the heaviest impact from frequency reductions on both outgoing and return flights. Many key business and leisure routes connected to these airports will operate with fewer services, making peak-hour travel more crowded and potentially less convenient for



passengers. From Mumbai, services to Jaipur, Goa, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Patna and Bhopal will be seeing reduced frequencies. From Delhi, flights to Goa, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Kochi and Kolkata are affected. Bengaluru, as a major southern hub, will feel the ripple effect

through reduced return flights on these sectors. **WHY ARE INDIAN AIRLINES CUTTING DOWN ON FLIGHTS?** The main reasons behind the cuts are quite straightforward. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices have risen sharply, by about 25% for domestic operations and even higher for international flights due to the war in West Asia. Exactly a month ago, India's airline industry had sought urgent government intervention as a sharp rise in jet fuel prices began to strain operations and push up costs. Fuel costs form a large part of airline budgets, and this increase has forced carriers to rationalise operations. On top of that, travel demand might have softened, with many people cutting back on discretionary trips. Air India said in a statement that the adjustments are a temporary measure

driven by high fuel prices. "Air India will continue to monitor demand and operating conditions closely," the airline noted. IndiGo pointed to softer demand in the post-summer lean season as a key factor for its 5-7% cut. **AIRFARES HAVE INCREASED ON SEVERAL ROUTES** The move is likely to push airfares higher. Fares on several routes have already increased by 30% in recent weeks, and airlines have introduced fuel surcharges of Rs 400-450 per passenger due to higher ATF costs. With fewer seats available, prices could climb further, especially on busy sectors linking Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, which could make air travel less affordable for many during the next three months. However, airlines are restoring some international services to West Asia as airspace restrictions ease.

Delhi: Rain, thunderstorm bring respite from heat

New Delhi.(Agency)
After days of heatwave conditions, the Capital witnessed dark clouds, followed by strong winds, thunder and spells of rain on Thursday evening. The change in weather brought much-needed relief and a sharp drop in temperatures after several days of scorching conditions across Delhi. After the weather changed, temperatures dropped significantly by around six to 10 degrees Celsius over the past 24 hours. According to the IMD, a fall of three to 11 degrees Celsius was recorded across various weather stations in Delhi due to thunderstorm activity. Safdarjung, the city's base station, logged a maximum temperature of 41.1 degrees Celsius, 0.7 degree below normal and 3.2 notches lower than the previous day. The minimum temperature settled at 28.4 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees above normal and 2.2 degrees higher than a day earlier. Rainfall recorded till 7 pm included 6.5 mm in Mehrauli, 0.9 mm at Pragati Maidan and 0.5 mm at Ayanagar. While Ayanagar recorded a temperature drop of 11 degrees Celsius due to the thunderstorms, Mehrauli saw a decline of 10 degrees Celsius and Narayana recorded a fall of 6 degrees Celsius. The weather department issued a red alert, warning of moderate to severe thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, dust storms and isolated hailstorms at several places, with wind speeds likely to reach up to 80 km per hour. The IMD has also issued an orange alert for Friday, forecasting thunderstorms accompanied by rain. The minimum temperature is expected to settle around 24 degrees Celsius, while the maximum temperature is likely to witness a major drop and remain around 36 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the weather office said the current spell of rain and thunderstorm activity is likely to continue till May 31.

BJP, AAP exchange barbs on 'delay' in formation of MCD committees

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday traded barbs over the repeated postponement of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) ward and standing committee elections. Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor criticised Aam Aadmi Party leaders for accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party of delaying the formation of MCD committees. He questioned why the opposition had remained silent when AAP allegedly failed to constitute any civic body committee between November 2022 and March 2025, which, he claimed, brought civic maintenance work in the city to a standstill. Kapoor said the "crocodile tears" shed by AAP leaders, including Ankush Narang and Saurabh Bharadwaj, over the delay in ward committee elections had surprised both Delhi residents and AAP councillors. The Aam Aadmi Party had earlier alleged that internal politics within the BJP had overtaken constitutional processes, leading to repeated postponement of the elections. Bharadwaj claimed that notifications for the elections had already been issued twice after all necessary files were signed, but the polls were postponed again without explanation. "The MCD Ward Committee and Standing Committee elections have been scheduled twice, yet postponed repeatedly. Was it because Virendra Sachdeva's exit had to happen first? What exactly is happening inside the BJP?" Bharadwaj asked. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the MCD Ankush Narang also attacked the BJP. In a post on X, he said, "The BJP is repeatedly running away from conducting MCD Ward Committee elections. The committee elections have now been postponed for the third time. Nominations for the committee elections were scheduled for May 29 and voting was to take place on June 3, but the elections are indefinitely postponed without following the prescribed procedure."

Japan bans Indian mangoes after pest-control lapses found at export facilities

New Delhi.(Agency)
Japan has halted mango imports from India after quarantine officials flagged deficiencies in pest-control procedures at Indian export treatment centres, dealing a blow to shipments during the peak summer mango season. The suspension affects premium Indian varieties including Alphonso, Kesar, Langra and Banganapalli, which are exported to Japan under strict phytosanitary rules. Japanese authorities are learnt to have raised concerns over whether Indian consignments were fully complying with the country's plant health standards. According to a report by Economic Times, inspectors from Japan found operational irregularities at vapour heat treatment (VHT) facilities in India during inspections conducted earlier this year. These facilities are



tasked with disinfecting mangoes before export to ensure they are free from pests such as fruit flies. Japan follows a zero-tolerance policy towards invasive pests, particularly fruit flies, which are considered a serious threat to its domestic agriculture sector. Following the inspection, the Yokohama Plant Protection Association reportedly informed importers that Indian mango shipments carrying inspection certificates issued after March 25,

2026, would no longer be accepted. The decision marked Japan's first major restriction on Indian mango imports in nearly 20 years. Tokyo had previously imposed a similar ban over fruit fly infestations and lifted it only in 2006 after India upgraded its treatment and certification systems. While Japan is not among India's largest overseas mango markets, the suspension is being viewed as a reputational setback for Indian agricultural exports. Multiple reports suggested that exporters fear the move could trigger wider scrutiny over India's quality-control mechanisms and export compliance standards in other international markets as well. The timing has further worsened concerns for mango growers, particularly in Maharashtra's Alphonso belt, where farmers are already battling severe crop losses linked to extreme.

Why the Air Force may be roped in for NEET-UG re-exam

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Centre seems to be pulling out all the stops to ensure that the NEET-UG re-test passes off without any leaks and lapses. With the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) now directly monitoring the exam process, the Education Ministry is considering an unprecedented step - roping in the defence forces for logistics and transportation of question papers. It raises a troubling question. Has conducting a fair exam become such a daunting challenge in the country? The development comes after the May 3 medical entrance exam was cancelled following a paper leak, throwing the future of 23 lakh students in limbo and triggering



massive protests. The re-test will be held on June 21. At the centre of all the fire is the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts most of the major central exams, including the NEET. A probe so far has revealed multiple points of leakage in the journey of the NEET question paper from the printing press to the exam centres. It is to plug this gap that the defence

forces might be roped in. **WHY DEFENCE FORCES MAY BE INVOLVED?** The proposal was discussed at a high-level meeting between Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday, according to a report in PTI. Senior Indian Air Force (IAF) officers were also present. As per the report, the IAF will be responsible for transporting the NEET-UG question papers from the printing press to exam destinations across the country. Moreover, considering the unpredictable weather in June due to rain, the government believes entrusting the transportation of these sensitive documents to the IAF would be the safest option.

Internet-enabled devices to help prevent fire in Delhi buildings

In the second phase, critical alarms such as pump power failures, low hydrant and sprinkler pressure and fire alarm faults will also be directly transmitted to the Delhi Fire Service (DFS).

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Delhi government has made it mandatory for specified buildings to install an Internet of Things (IoT)-based Automated Continuous Monitoring System (ACMS) to digitally monitor fire prevention and life safety systems in real time, according to a recent gazette notification. Introduced under the Delhi Fire Service (Amendment) Rules, the system aims to ensure that active and passive fire safety measures remain functional, well-maintained and capable of responding during emergencies. Under the new rules, the ACMS will monitor firefighting infrastructure such as hydrant pumps, sprinkler systems, fire water tanks, fire detection systems, manual call points, public address systems, pressurisation fans and basement ventilation systems. The monitoring mechanism will operate through IoT gateways connected to cloud-based servers that will generate real-time alerts and reports for building owners, occupiers and empanelled fire safety auditors through mobile applications, emails and SMS alerts. According to the notification, implementation will take place in two phases. In the first phase, which comes into effect immediately, alerts and system health reports will be accessible to building owners, occupiers and fire safety auditors. In the second phase, critical alarms such as pump power failures, low hydrant and sprinkler pressure and fire alarm faults will also be directly transmitted to the Delhi Fire Service (DFS). The rules further specify that the system must digitally track key firefighting components, including main hydrant pumps, diesel and electric standby pumps, jockey pumps, booster pumps, underground and overhead fire water tanks, sprinkler risers and fire alarm control panels. The system will also monitor manual call points, public address systems, staircase pressurisation fans, lift lobby pressurisation systems and basement exhaust fans.

In 10 minutes if there's gap: Fleeing Bangladeshis reveal how they crossed into India

New Delhi.(Agency)
Fearing being detained at holding centres amid a crackdown, hundreds of Bangladeshi illegal immigrants are now flocking to border points and transit terminals in West Bengal. While unsure about crossing over, Bangladeshi aliens who have lived in India for decades, and in some cases their entire lives, are now speaking about how they entered India illegally and procured documents. Some recalled crossing rivers to enter India, while others spoke about how dalal, or middlemen, used the cover of darkness to coordinate crossings. A person revealed that they could slip into India in 10 minutes if the middlemen found a "patrolling gap". Others claimed that people of a network, which included workers of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, helped arrange identity documents. They said they

received cash benefits through various schemes and even voted in India. The accounts come amid a crackdown on illegal immigrants in West Bengal. Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari has declared that illegal Bangladeshi migrants should neither be sheltered nor produced in court, but instead be directly handed over to the BSF at the border. The BJP government has also said that welfare benefits for illegal migrants in Bengal are being identified and cut off. Border districts in West Bengal have seen increased checking and monitoring in recent weeks. Amid this, reports have also emerged of people voluntarily seeking to return to Bangladesh to avoid detention centres or deportation proceedings. Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday, referring to the reports of hundreds of

people heading to Bangladesh, said "since the infiltrators were returning on their own", the government would not take any legal action against them. He



"congratulated Suvenudh Adhikari for handing over 600 hectares of land to the BSF", including some along the Chicken Neck. The most striking detail in the testimonies is how organised some of the crossings

allegedly were. The entire trail has been reconstructed from admissions by illegal immigrants to several outlets. A carpenter from Bangladesh's Kushtia district said that he paid Rs 7,000-8,000 to a middleman who watched the movement of BSF personnel at night and sent groups across whenever there was a "gap" in patrolling. Another Bangladeshi illegal migrant in Bengaluru claimed he crossed over despite "military at the border" after paying Rs 20,000 to an agent. **'THE MOMENT THEY FIND A GAP, THEY SEND BANGLADESHIS ACROSS TO INDIA'** An illegal Bangladeshi migrant told a local YouTube channel, Haldia Live, that he crossed into India from Kushtia with his brothers through a middleman network.

Stock markets climb in early trade amid drop in oil prices

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty climbed in early trade on Friday following a decline in crude oil prices on reports that the US and Iran reached an understanding to extend the ceasefire for another 60 days. Buying in IT stocks and a positive trend in global markets also added to the optimism.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 352.22 points to 76,220.02 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 95.65 points to 24,002.80. From the 30-Sensex firms, Infosys, Trent, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were among the gainers. Bharti Airtel, ITC, Bharat Electronics and InterGlobe Aviation were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1.12 per cent lower at USD 92.66 per barrel.

"There are some positive trends on the economic and market front. Brent crude declining to below USD 93 is a big positive. This has happened on expectations of a deal between the US and Iran.

Therefore, if a deal happens crude can decline further, thereby improving India's macros which have been under pressure from the energy crisis," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index were trading higher, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted lower.

US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Reports indicate that the United States and Iran have agreed to a 60-day truce renewal, pending final approval from US President Donald Trump, Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said. "Although formal confirmation is still awaited, the development has significantly improved global risk sentiment and raised hopes of sustained de-escalation in the Middle East," he added. Stock markets were closed on Thursday for Eid-ul-Azha.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,042.70 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

India among 30+ nations working to build non-China supply chain

Kolkata .(Agency)

India, along with more than 30 countries, is working to build an alternative supply chain for critical minerals used in electric vehicles, smartphones and defence equipment, as governments seek to reduce heavy dependence on China after Beijing tightened exports of key minerals, sources said.

"India, along with 30-40 other countries, is trying to create an alternative market and supply chain for critical minerals to reduce import dependence on China," an official aware of the matter said.

India is in talks with Chile, Canada, Japan, Australia and others to bring them on board for creating a resilient critical minerals supply chain.

Recently, India, Australia, Japan and the US—the Quad partners—set an ambitious target of mobilising up to \$20 billion in government and private-sector support to build secure critical minerals supply chains, reduce dependence on dominant suppliers and strengthen regional industry.

"India does have reserves, but these are mostly used for very specific projects, such as those in ISRO. For mass-market needs like smartphones and vehicles, the industry is still importing from China," another official said. The biggest challenge lies in convincing Indian industry to source from alternative markets, as China continues to enjoy a strong competitive edge in critical mineral exports, sources said adding that pricing is a big concern. The challenge lies in matching prices and convincing industry to buy from India and partner countries that are working together," the official said. India is seeking to position itself as a trusted partner in emerging mineral alliances. "Countries need confidence in our systems before they open up sensitive technologies," the official said.

Indian firms face rising AI cloud bills as infrastructure costs outpace labour savings

New Delhi.(Agency)

Indian companies adopting artificial intelligence are facing rapidly rising cloud and infrastructure costs as enterprise spending shifts away from labour-heavy IT services towards GPUs, cloud subscriptions and AI platforms. "The assumption was that companies could remove labour costs and replace them with cheaper AI infrastructure, but in many cases AI infrastructure spending is now growing faster than payroll savings," said an analyst tracking enterprise AI spending trends who wished to be unnamed. "Firms are discovering that AI improves productivity, but not always enough to offset rising inference, cloud and subscription costs." Research firm Gartner said global AI spending is expected to rise 47% year-on-year to \$2.59 trillion in 2026, with AI infrastructure accounting for more than 45% of total spending. At the same time, UearthInsight said enterprise technology budgets are increasingly rotating "from people-hours to platform-subscriptions", as companies spend more on cloud inference, AI agents and AI infrastructure.

The pressure is becoming more visible among Indian IT firms, banks, startups and large enterprises deploying AI tools across coding, customer support, workflow automation and internal operations.

According to UearthInsight, cloud subscription growth in FY26 ranged between 19% and 27%, while IT services revenue growth slowed to between negative 2% and positive 4%. "In many enterprises, labour savings from AI-led restructuring are being outweighed by rising spending on GPUs, cloud inference and enterprise AI subscriptions. Companies may save 5-10% on workforce costs in the near term, but AI infrastructure and model consumption costs are growing 20-30% annually.

Inspection Raj in the service of employers evading compliance

In the ninth part of this series on labour laws and Inspector Raj, this article examines how reduced scrutiny in the name of "ease of doing business" may create space for wilful labour law violations.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Limiting the scope of inspections under labour laws — now subsumed under the Code on Social Security, 2020 — in the name of promoting "ease of doing business" has two consequences that are widely understood, though rarely acknowledged openly. The first is that it opens the door to wilful evasion of labour laws by employers.

The second is that it chokes the flow of "other income" to pliable While a small number of inspecting officers remain true to their duty, an equally small minority go to extraordinary lengths to facilitate employer non-compliance.

I encountered one such case.

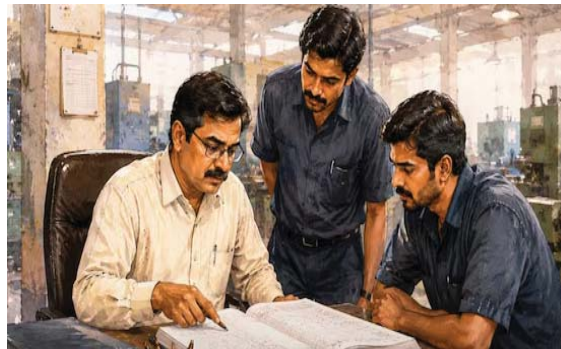
The factory was a medium-scale industrial unit run by a public limited company engaged in the manufacture of electrical steel laminations and electrical-grade stampings for rotating electrical equipment.

The Insurance Inspector had conducted a regular inspection on 16 and 17 June 1999 and verified records for the period from April 1997 to March 1999.

When I visited the factory, located in a nearby village, on 4 May 2000, I was informed that only the attendance register was maintained there and that all other records were kept at the company's registered office in the city.

As was my practice, I walked through the factory premises and asked individual employees about their coverage under the ESI Act, 1948. enforcement officers. What I found was disturbing.

There were 29 coverable employees who had not been brought under ESI coverage, apart from four apprentices sponsored by the State Government.



When I insisted on the production of the record in which their names were entered, a second attendance register, kept with the security guard, surfaced.

It revealed that Five employees were engaged through one contractor for the collection of materials;

Twenty-two employees were engaged through another contractor for material handling; and

Two employees were directly employed by the company for gardening work.

I recommended the issuance of a show-

cause notice to the principal employer for this violation. The conclusion was unavoidable:

Either the Inspector had never physically visited the factory, or he had failed to verify the actual number of employees present. In either case, a serious violation had gone unreported.

VISIT TO THE REGISTERED OFFICE

I then visited the company's registered and head office later the same day. The employer initially produced: The general ledger for 1998–99;

Attendance registers;

Wage sheets; and

Form 7 registers showing employee-wise compliance for 1997–98 and 1998–99.

Time was sought to produce the remaining records, and the employer eventually submitted the general ledger for 1997–98, along with vouchers, at our regional office on 18 May 2000. Verification of the ledgers was an eye-opener. They showed that eleven heads of account contained wage-related payments amounting to:

IT stocks lead gains as Sensex, Nifty open higher on easing oil prices

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened with modest gains on Thursday, supported by easing crude oil prices, a stronger rupee and optimism around a possible US-Iran deal that could ease pressure on India's economy. The S&P BSE Sensex rose 98.09 points, or 0.13%, to 75,965.89 in early trade, while the NSE Nifty50 gained 16.20 points, or 0.07%, to 23,923.35, as of 9:25 am. Investor sentiment received support after Brent crude fell below the \$93 per barrel mark amid expectations that the US and Iran could reach an agreement. Brent crude was down 1.12% at \$92.66 per barrel, while WTI crude declined 1.17% to \$87.85 per barrel. The Indian rupee also strengthened 0.15% to open at 95.55 against the US dollar, compared with its previous close of 95.69. Broader markets traded in positive territory, with the Nifty Midcap 100 rising 0.21% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 gaining 0.38%. India VIX, the volatility index, slipped 1.16%, indicating lower market volatility. Among sectoral indices, Nifty IT emerged as the top gainer, rising 2.07%. Nifty Realty advanced 0.61%, while Nifty Pharma and Nifty PSU Bank gained 0.59% and 0.58%, respectively. Nifty Media rose 0.36% and Nifty Healthcare Index added 0.31%. On the other hand, Nifty Consumer Durables declined 0.17%, while Nifty Oil & Gas slipped 0.07%. Among Sensex stocks, Infosys led the gainers with a rise of 3.09%. HCL Technologies climbed 1.52%, Tata Consultancy Services gained 1.48%, Trent advanced 1.47%, and Tech Mahindra rose 1.06%. Maruti Suzuki India and ICICI Bank also traded higher.

On the losing side, Bharti Airtel fell 1.33%, Bharat Electronics declined 0.98%, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone slipped 0.90%, HDFC Bank dropped 0.80%, and Indigo was down 0.51% in early trade.

Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said, "There are some positive trends on the economic and market front. Brent crude declining to below \$93 is a big positive. This has happened on expectations of a deal between US and Iran. Therefore, if a deal happens crude can decline further, thereby improving India's macros which have been under pressure from the energy crisis. This will also help stabilise the rupee, which, in turn, can restrain the FPI outflows."

He added, "Already, the intensity of FPI selling has come down. A positive trend from the market perspective is that Q4 results have been better-than-expected. The double digit earnings growth in financials, automobiles and metals is impressive.

Wipro jumps 5%, lifts IT stocks as AI deal sparks sector rally

New Delhi.(Agency)

Wipro shares surged nearly 5% on Thursday, leading a broad rally in information technology stocks after the company announced an expanded artificial intelligence partnership with US-based software firm ServiceNow.

The stock gained as much as 4.76% during the day to Rs 211.20, while its American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) listed in the US had jumped more than 18% overnight.

Wipro's ADRs rallied 18.54% to close at \$2.43 on the New York Stock Exchange after surging as much as 21% during the session, marking their biggest single-day gain since October 2008. The sharp move came after the Bengaluru-based IT services company unveiled an expanded collaboration with ServiceNow focused on deploying agentic AI workflows across enterpr

Under the expanded partnership, Wipro will integrate Wipro Intelligence, its suite of AI-powered platforms and solutions, with the ServiceNow AI Platform. The companies aim to help businesses

automate and streamline processes across key functions including IT, human resources, procurement and cybersecurity.

Wipro said the partnership would help organisations reduce procurement bottlenecks, improve service quality



and issue resolution in telecom operations, and strengthen cybersecurity response systems through AI-driven workflows.

The rally in Wipro quickly spread across the broader IT sector. Infosys jumped 3.80%, Tata Consultancy Services gained 1.70%, HCL Technologies rose 1.46%, and Tech Mahindra advanced

0.91%. The Nifty IT index climbed more than 2%, making it one of the top-performing sectoral indices of the day.

The strong gains in IT heavyweights also helped support the broader market. At a time when several banking, industrial and consumer stocks were trading in the red, buying in Infosys, TCS, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra and Wipro helped keep benchmark indices in positive territory.ise operations. Apart from the AI partnership, investor sentiment has also been supported by Wipro's upcoming share buyback. In April, the company's board approved a Rs 15,000 crore buyback at Rs 250 per share. Wipro plans to repurchase up to 60 crore equity shares, representing more than 5% of its equity capital. The record date for the buyback has been fi With a sharp ADR rally, fresh optimism around AI-led growth opportunities and continued interest ahead of the buyback, Wipro has emerged as one of the best-performing large-cap IT stocks in recent sessions. xed as June 5.

Rupee rises 5 paise to 95.53 against dollar in early trade after US-Iran agree to extend ceasefire

New Delhi.(Agency)

The rupee rose 5 paise to 95.53 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, after the US and Iran reached an understanding to extend the ceasefire for another 60 days. Forex traders said the agreement is expected to keep trade flowing through the strategic Strait of Hormuz while both countries continue negotiations around Iran's nuclear program. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.77 against the US dollar, then gained ground and touched 95.53 in early trade, up 5 paise from its previous close. In initial trade the rupee also touched 95.78 against the American currency. On Wednesday, the rupee settled higher by 12 paise at 95.58 against the US dollar. Domestic equity and forex markets were closed on Thursday on account of Eid-ul-Azha. US and Iranian negotiators

reached a tentative agreement on Thursday to extend the ceasefire in the three-month-old war by 60 days.

"For markets, this mattered because it reduced immediate fears of fresh disruption in oil supplies. As a result, crude oil prices stayed relatively stable, something that always offers relief to oil-importing countries like India," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was tradi Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading down 1.12 per cent USD 92.66 per barrel in futures trade.

According to traders, a softer dollar and stable oil prices could provide some near-term support to the rupee. However, the rupee's biggest challenge right now remains foreign investment flows.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have sold nearly USD 24 billion from Indian equity markets since the beginning of 2026. Debt market flows, in comparison, have remained relatively stable with inflows of around USD 1 billion. ng at 99.09, up 0.07 per cent Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 1,042.70 crore on a net basis on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"The RBI has already been using several tools to stabilise the rupee, including liquidity operations, forex management measures and steps to curb speculative positions. But if pressure on the currency continues, interest rates could eventually become the next line of defence," Pabari said, adding that "the upcoming RBI policy meeting between June 3 and June 5 has become extremely important."

Under-construction or ready-to-move home: Which saves me more money in the long run?

Buying a home is exciting, but one question often leaves buyers confused: should you go for a cheaper under-construction property or pay more for a ready-to-move home? Let's have a look.

New Delhi.(Agency)

We have all heard this line at some point: "Buying a house is the biggest investment of your life." Fair enough. But what people rarely tell you is that buying a house can also become one of life's biggest financial dilemmas. I found myself thinking about this recently. If I were buying a home today, would I go for an under-construction property because it looks cheaper on paper? Or would I stretch my budget a little and pick a ready-to-move home that offers certainty from day one? At first glance, the answer feels simple. A lower price tag sounds tempting.

But the deeper I looked, i.e., rent, GST, EMIs, tax benefits, delays and even legal headaches, the more complicated the maths became. So, when it comes to your money, which option truly makes more sense? THE LOWER PRICE TRAP: IS CHEAPER ALWAYS BETTER?

Let us begin with what draws most buyers towards under-construction homes: affordability. The entry price is usually lower, payment schedules are more flexible and there is often hope that by the time the project is complete, the property value would have risen.

It sounds like a smart financial move.

But there is another side to the story.

Akash Pharande, Managing Director, Pharande Spaces, says the decision largely depends on what a buyer values more — immediate certainty or long-term gains. "Properties that are still under construction usually come with lower entry prices, more flexible instalment arrangements, and often better appreciation prospects by the time the whole project gets finished," he says.

At the same time, he points out that ready-

to-move homes offer something equally valuable: predictability. "Ready-to-move homes give immediate possession, zero construction worries, and in many cases



GST is not applied, so your overall budgeting feels a bit more stable and predictable." That made me think.

Perhaps paying more upfront is not always about spending extra. Sometimes, it is simply the price of avoiding uncertainty. THE HIDDEN COST NOBODY MENTIONS: RENT PLUS EMI

Here is where the real financial stress often begins. Imagine booking an under-construction flat while continuing to live

in a rented apartment. For several months, or in some cases, years, you may end up juggling rent along with pre-EMIs or home loan repayments. Suddenly, the "budget-friendly" home no longer feels so affordable. Pharande admits this can become a genuine challenge for salaried buyers. "For lots of salaried buyers there can be this short-term double financial load, especially when buying a home that is still under construction. They end up paying rent alongside dealing with pre-EMI or EMI responsibilities during the building period," he explains. While staggered payment plans offered by developers and banks can reduce some pressure, he says buyers still need to examine their cash flow carefully before committing. Tax expert and CA Nishant Shankar puts it even more bluntly.

"A buyer may continue paying rent while simultaneously servicing pre-EMI interest or EMIs on the home loan, creating a temporary double cash-flow burden. This can significantly strain finances, especially if possession gets delayed," he says.

Short news

‘Horse for Sale’ board at Kannada actor Darshan’s farm

MYSURU.(Agency)

Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa is reportedly selling his horses housed at Vinish Darshan Marwari Stud Farm, located on the Mysuru-T Narasipura Road. A large board announcing ‘Horse for Sale’ was placed in front of the



property.

Darshan, who is currently lodged in Parappana Agrahara Central Jail in connection with the 2024 Renukaswamy murder case, was known to frequently visit his sprawling farmhouse, ‘Thoogudeepa Farm’, at Old Kempaiahana Hundi near T Narasipura to unwind after hectic film shoots.

Darshan owns over 20 racehorses, along with two dozen cows, Hallikar bulls, sheep, goats, emus, pedigree dogs, ducks, donkeys, and several other animals, all kept in separate enclosures on the farm.

“The horses at the farm are imported breeds worth several lakhs of rupees,” a source said.

Dr Ramachandra, former veterinarian at Thoogudeepa Farm, told TNIE that the racehorses at the property are extremely valuable. “However, I have no idea why Darshan has decided to sell them,” he added..

SIMTA urges PM Modi for Relief as Diesel prices hit transport sector

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The South India Motor Transporters Association (SIMTA), representing truckers, transporters and passenger vehicle operators across south India, has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide immediate financial relief to the road transport sector in view of the sharp increase in diesel prices and worsening business conditions.

In the letter to Modi, the SIMTA said the transport industry was facing a severe financial crisis due to rising operational costs, declining freight earnings, excess vehicle availability and weak market demand. The association stated that diesel prices have increased by nearly Rs 7.5 per litre in the past 10 days alone, adding further pressure on transport operators already struggling with low freight rates.

The SIMTA said around 40–45% of commercial vehicles across the country are currently lying idle because of insufficient freight demand and imbalance between vehicle capacity and transportation needs. The association also cited the ongoing West Asia crisis and fuel supply uncertainties as factors affecting transport operations nationwide.

According to the association, nearly 60–65% of transport operation expenses are linked directly to diesel costs, while another 18–20% is spent on toll charges and statutory compliances. However, transporters are unable to pass on the increased fuel burden to customers owing to intense competition and weak freight markets.

Nor’wester brings mercury down across Odisha, but six districts still on heatwave radar

CHENNAI.(Agency)

Mercury plunged in several parts of the state following Wednesday’s nor’wester rains, bringing citizens some much-needed respite from the cruel heat and diluting the effect of the sweltering conditions.

For the first time in the last one week, temperature did not cross 45 degree Celsius anywhere in the state on Thursday. Only 12 towns in the state crossed the 40 degree Celsius mark on the day of which the highest 43.2 deg C was recorded in Balangir. It was followed by Sambalpur at 43.1 deg C and Titilagarh 43 deg C.

The coastal region, meanwhile, remained cooler compared to western Odisha districts. According to the situation report released by the office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), heatwave condition is likely to prevail at isolated places in Sambalpur, Boudh, Nuapada, Balangir, Sonepur and Kalahandi districts on Friday. Similarly, warm night condition has been predicted in isolated places over Balangir and Sambalpur districts. On the other hand, hot and humid conditions are likely to prevail in isolated places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Sonepur, Gajapati, Ganjam, Puri, Khurda and Nayagarh districts. In its extended range forecast, the IMD said maximum temperature is likely to be in the range of 36-38 deg C over most parts of coastal Odisha, 38-40 deg C in most parts of interior Odisha and 40-42 deg C in some parts of north interior Odisha during next week.

Court reserves order on former Bengal DCP’s plea for Grade 1 status in jail

Kolkata.(Agency)

A vacation court in Kolkata on Thursday rejected the bail plea of history-sheeter and real estate developer Biswajit Poddar alias Sona Pappu and sent him and former Deputy Commissioner of Police Santanu Sinha Biswas to judicial custody till June 1 in connection with extortion and land-grabbing cases.

The two were produced by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) at the Bankshall court after their 14-day custody ended on Thursday. During the hearing, Pappu’s counsel moved a bail plea, citing his “medical condition”.

The counsel of Biswas, on the other hand, sought Grade One status for him in jail custody, citing that there was a threat to his life in jail as he was a police officer.

“Grade One” status typically refers to a Division I prisoner classification, which entitles the inmate to better food, clothing, and living conditions.



“One of the accused was a police officer who dealt with sensitive and high-profile cases. So there is a threat to his life if he is sent to jail custody. He has been an IO (Investigating Officer) in several cases over a period of time, and those convicts or undertrials are in jail. There can be an untoward incident,” the counsel of Biswas told the court.

Citing his age – Biswas is 62 years old – the counsel said that his client was suffering from various ailments. “He is not a habitual offender, and he has not been convicted. By his social status, which comes by education,

family; and he is the son of a former MP, there is danger to my client’s life,” the counsel of Biswas added. The ED opposed Pappu’s bail plea and urged the court to keep the matter for Monday for the regular bench hearing. “We pray for judicial custody for both. They have placed an application for Grade One status for Santanu Sinha Biswas, but he is not undertrial as we have not filed a prosecution complaint.

Also, we need time to verify whether the submission they have made that there are convicts or undertrials of cases investigated by Biswas are lodged in that particular jail. We leave it up to the court to see whether he is a Grade One prisoner or not,” the ED’s counsel submitted. After hearing the argument, the Magistrate ordered judicial custody of both Pappu and Biswas, and reserved the order for the Grade One status for the former DCP. The Enforcement Directorate is probing a money laundering case involving Sona Pappu.

Decks cleared for hiring 4,000 assistant professors in govt-run institutions across TN

CHENNAI.(Agency)

The Madras High Court has granted approval to the Teachers Recruitment Board (TRB) to proceed with the process for recruiting 4,000 assistant professors to government-run colleges (arts and science), college of education, and constituent colleges in the state.

A division bench of Justices R Suresh Kumar and V Lakshminarayanan passed the orders on Wednesday while allowing the writ appeals moved by the state government against a single judge’s order quashing two GOs issued in 2022 regarding open competitive process for the recruitment. The TRB had issued a notification on March 14, 2024, for filling 4,000 vacancies of assistant professors in government-run colleges pursuant to two GOs issued by the higher education department on the mode of selection – open



competitive process – and to do away with earmarking of certain posts to guest lecturers.

Guest lecturers, feeling aggrieved by the GOs and notification, approached the court for regularising their services as per a GO issued on March 21, 2020, which earmarked 1,146 posts for guest lecturers. A single judge, by an order dated April 2, 2024, quashed the portion of the 2022 GO pertaining to not providing a separate

window for guest lecturers to be regularised, and directed the government to continue the selection process in terms of the 2022 GO and complete the exercise in 12 weeks. Challenging the orders of the single judge, the government filed the appeals. The bench set aside the single judge’s order and issued the directions for recruiting assistant professors. It ordered the government to give appropriate directions to the TRB to notify additional 1,292 posts for recruitment in addition to the 2025 notification for 2,708 posts. Noting that the government had stated that it has financial capacity to recruit 4,000 assistant posts and 42,064 people have applied, the bench said the recruitment shall be made on open competitive process. It directed the TRB to grant a maximum of 15 weightage marks to the guest lecturers based on their experience and age relaxation for those who have rendered a very long period of service.

Every aircraft will have made-in-Telangana component by 2030, says Minister Sridhar

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Telangana aims to ensure that by 2030, every aircraft flying anywhere in the world will carry at least one component made in Telangana, according to IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu. He emphasised that the state is positioning itself as a global hub for aerospace and defence manufacturing. The minister highlighted that aerospace and defence exports from the state have significantly increased, rising from Rs 15,900 crore in 2024 to Rs 32,850 crore in the current financial year, reflecting an annual growth of 103%.

For the first time since the formation of Telangana, aerospace and defence exports have surpassed pharmaceuticals to become the state’s leading export segment.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Telangana has attracted investments in aerospace and defence worth Rs 4,200 crore since January 2024. Additionally, projects worth another Rs 12,500 crore are



currently in the pipeline.

Hyd has turned hub for aerospace manufacturing: Min

The minister noted Hyderabad’s rapid growth in aerospace manufacturing, including areas such as aero-engines, defence systems, drones, and space

technologies. Recently, major aerospace facilities have been inaugurated by Safran Aircraft Engines and Tata Advanced Systems Limited.

The Safran Aircraft Engine Services India (SAESI) facility at GMR Aerospace Park, established with an investment of around Rs 1,300 crore, is the company’s largest global Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) centre for LEAP aircraft engines. This facility covers 45,000 square meters and is expected to service up to 300 LEAP engines annually, generating over 1,000 skilled jobs by 2035.

Safran has also announced the establishment of an M88 engine MRO facility in Hyderabad, with an investment exceeding Rs 400 crore for servicing Rafale fighter jet engines. This proposed facility is expected to employ around 150 specialists and service more than 600 engine modules annually.

Andhra Pradesh HC introduces new electronic process rules for courts to serve summons

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

In a significant reform, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has introduced new electronic process rules titled the Andhra Pradesh Electronic Processes (Issue, Service and Execution) Rules, 2025, enabling courts to serve summons and warrants directly through digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, email and other messaging applications on Thursday.

The new set of rules aimed at modernising the delivery and execution of court summons and warrants through electronic platforms. The new regulations, titled the Andhra Pradesh Electronic Processes (Issue, Service and Execution) Rules, 2025, are expected to significantly speed up court proceedings and eliminate delays caused during the manual delivery of notices. Under the new system, courts can now send summons, warrants and other notices directly to accused persons, witnesses and victims through messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram and other electronic platforms, apart from official email IDs.

The move is aimed at preventing excuses such as “I did not receive the summons” or “I was out of station,” which are often cited to delay legal proceedings. Police officials will now be required to submit screenshots or digital proof showing successful delivery of messages to the court. In the case of emails, delivery reports generated by the service provider will be treated as valid legal evidence. All electronic summons issued by courts will be encrypted and digitally signed either.

Betwa River bridge collapse: 6 killed, 3 injured after slab crushes workers in UP

Lucknow.(Agency)

Six labourers were killed after a section of an under-construction bridge over the Betwa River in Uttar Pradesh’s Hamirpur collapsed late Thursday night, following a powerful storm accompanied by heavy rain and strong wind lashed the district.

A concrete slab fell, trapping workers. Rescue teams worked through the night and continued search operations on Friday amid fears that more people could be trapped. So far, three people have been pulled out alive. The bridge, an 800-metre-long structure spanning the Betwa River, has been under construction since 2024 and is intended to connect Mora Kandar and Kanda villages in Kurara block of Hamirpur district. The project is

considered a key link for improving connectivity in the region. “During preliminary inquiry, it was found that the victims were working when one of the slabs collapsed on them,” said Hamirpur Additional Superintendent of Police Arvind Kumar Verma.

He added that six men have died. The deceased were identified as Lokendra (22), Kuldeep Nishad (19), Sawant Yadav (28) and Sabhajeet (30), Pushpendra Chauhan (34), and Rajesh Pal (42), police said.

Sub-divisional magistrate, Hamirpur, Abhishek Kumar said of the six deceased, two are local residents and four are from neighbouring Banda district.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath took immediate cognisance of the tragedy and directed officials to speed up rescue, ensure treatment,

compensation.

Officials said that roughly 60 per cent of the bridge had been completed at the time of the accident. The supporting pillars had already been erected, and work was underway to install the concrete deck slabs. Five slabs had been placed before the collapse occurred.

According to police, they were alerted to the collapse late on Thursday night, triggering a large-scale emergency response. Police officers, firefighters and district administration officials rushed to the site and immediately launched rescue operations amid difficult weather conditions and concerns that more people could be trapped beneath the wreckage. Local residents also rushed to the spot.

NEWS BOX

French Open: Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff made to work hard to reach round 3



CHENNAI. (Agency)

Top seed Aryna Sabalenka was tested early in her second-round clash at the French Open before finding her rhythm to defeat France's Elsa Jacquemot 7-5, 6-2 and move into the third round at Roland Garros. Coco Gauff also overcame a couple of early jitters to defeat Mayar Sherif and make it to the next round. It was a day of upsets at the French Open, but the defending champion and the world No. 1 ensured that they didn't slip up at Roland Garros. Despite being heavily favoured, Sabalenka found it difficult to shake off the world No. 67 in the opening set. Jacquemot matched the Belarusian shot for shot as the contest remained level at 5-5 after the first 10 games. The momentum shifted late in the set when Sabalenka held serve to edge ahead 6-5 and then produced a crucial break in the next game to take the opener. From there, the world No. 1 took complete control of the match, breaking Jacquemot three times in the second set to wrap up the victory in straight sets.

Sabalenka will next face former world No. 8 Daria Kasatkina, who advanced after defeating Susan Bandecchi in her second-round encounter. The upcoming clash will renew a familiar rivalry, with Sabalenka holding a commanding 7-2 advantage in their previous nine meetings on the WTA Tour.

GAUFF CONTINUES TITLE DEFENCE

Meanwhile, Coco Gauff also booked her place in the third round after overcoming qualifier Mayar Sherif 6-3, 6-2. Although the defending champion looked comfortable for large stretches, her serve occasionally let her down during the match. Gauff earned early breaks in the first set on two separate occasions, only for Sherif to immediately fight back each time. The American eventually regained control by breaking again for a 5-3 lead before serving out the set. The second set followed a similar pattern, with Gauff twice moving ahead by a break before Sherif recovered to level the score at 2-2. However, the fourth seed remained composed under pressure and raised her level at the right moment, securing breaks in the fifth and seventh games to seal the win.

Neymar's FIFA World Cup fairytale in threat, set to miss Brazil's opener



NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Brazil have been dealt a major blow ahead of the World Cup, with Neymar ruled out of the Selecao's upcoming friendlies and potentially their opening group-stage clash after suffering a calf injury. The 34-year-old forward is expected to be sidelined for between two and three weeks following a grade two calf strain, an injury that involves a partial tear in the muscle fibres and requires rest along with rehabilitation. As a result, Neymar will miss Brazil's friendly fixtures against Panama on Sunday and Egypt on June 6 in Cleveland, Ohio. His availability for Brazil's World Cup opener against Morocco on June 13 in New Jersey is also in doubt. Brazil will then face Haiti in Philadelphia on June 19 before taking on Scotland in Miami five days later.

Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar confirmed the setback during a press conference, explaining that Neymar has a grade two calf injury. As a result, Neymar will miss Brazil's friendly fixtures against Panama on Sunday and Egypt on June 6 in Cleveland, Ohio. His availability for Brazil's World Cup opener against Morocco on June 13 in New Jersey is also in doubt. Brazil will then face Haiti in Philadelphia on June 19 before taking on Scotland in Miami five days later.

Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar confirmed the setback during a press conference, explaining that Neymar has a grade two calf injury. Neymar underwent all the medical tests, which concluded with an MRI scan revealing a grade two calf injury, not just swelling. He is expected to be cleared in two to three weeks," said Lasmar. The veteran attacker subsequently skipped Wednesday's training session and underwent medical examinations that revealed the injury. The diagnosis contradicts the earlier assessment provided by Santos club doctor Rodrigo Zogaib, who had suggested Neymar was only dealing with swelling and would be fit to train with the national side. Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti is already missing several key players for the Panama encounter. Arsenal duo Gabriel and Gabriel Martinelli, along with Paris Saint-Germain captain Marquinhos, are unavailable because of

Norway Chess: Gukesh drops last after Carlsen loss, Praggnanandhaa stays second

Magnus Carlsen dismantled D Gukesh with black to halt his own wobble at Norway Chess. The defeat left the world champion last, while Praggnanandhaa's resilience strengthened his firm hold on second place.

New Delhi. (Agency)

World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen bounced back to form with a commanding win over reigning classical world champion D Gukesh at Norway Chess, pushing the young Indian to the bottom of the standings after four rounds. Meanwhile, R Praggnanandhaa strengthened his hold on second place after defeating Vincent Keymer in the Armageddon tie-break on Thursday. The result marked a sharp turnaround for Carlsen after a sluggish start

to the tournament, while Gukesh's struggles continued ahead of his world title defence later this year against Uzbek challenger Javokhir Sindarov. oints. Seven-time Norway Chess champion Carlsen climbed from last place to sole fourth with 4.5 points after earning three full points against Gukesh. A visibly disappointed Gukesh exited the playing hall quietly through a side entrance as young fans waited outside for autographs. "I wouldn't say I was super-motivated today. I kind of had enough after playing really poorly for three days in a row with very little time. Today, I didn't have a lot of expectations, but I was happy with the way things went in the opening," Carlsen said after the victory as quoted by PTI. The Norwegian admitted he was surprised by Gukesh's opening approach and felt the Indian overpressed in search of an advantage. "He sometimes plays a little too ambitiously and I think he did that today as well. He wanted to prove a serious advantage, and I'm not sure there was one.



Eventually, he played himself into some trouble and I gradually took over," Carlsen added. Carlsen also revealed there were anxious moments late in the game despite his dominant position. "Right at the end I was a little worried if I was allowing him to take a knight with check. I was thinking, 'This happened against Praggnanandhaa yesterday, it happened against Gukesh last year — am I actually missing something?' But if I was, he didn't find it," he said. For Gukesh, the defeat added to mounting concerns over his form in Stavanger, where

the intense format and relentless pressure have exposed vulnerabilities in the young champion's game. The 20-year-old now heads into the rest day at the bottom of the table before a crucial all-Indian clash against Praggnanandhaa in the fifth round.

PRAGG STAYS SECOND AS DIVYA LOSSES

Tournament leader Alireza Firouzja retained top spot despite suffering his first setback of the event, an Armageddon defeat to Wesley So after their classical game ended in a draw. The French-Iranian grandmaster still earned one point to move to 8.5, maintaining a comfortable 2.5-point lead over Praggnanandhaa on six points. Praggnanandhaa and Keymer both missed winning opportunities during their classical encounter before the Indian teenager dominated the Armageddon tie-break, finishing the game in just 17 moves. "The Armageddon went smooth," Praggnanandhaa said after collecting 1.5 points and consolidating sole second place.

IPL Qualifier 2: Same same, but different as Gujarat and Rajasthan chase final spot

New Delhi. (Agency)

Rajasthan Royals' top three has scored 1,614 runs this IPL season. Gujarat Titans' top three has been a bit better: 1,768 runs in total. Rajasthan's strike bowlers with the new ball have picked 37 wickets. Gujarat's have outdone them with 43 wickets. Same, same? But, different. It will be a fascinating collision when Rajasthan Royals take on Gujarat Titans in IPL 2026 Qualifier 2, a virtual semifinal in New Chandigarh on Friday, May 29. Why are they the same, but different? Rajasthan's top three have gone about bludgeoning bowlers into the stands. Led by 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who has been clearing the ropes every four balls this season, they have detonated at the top and dared opposition to keep up. Gujarat's Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan have quietly assembled over 1,200 runs together, but they go about it differently: less chaos, more craft. With the ball, both teams have hunted in the powerplay. Jofra

Archer has been building to something frightening, sending batters back with 150 kph thunderbolts. Kagiso Rabada and



Mohammed Siraj, meanwhile, have been a wrecking ball at the top — 43 wickets between them, more than any other new-ball pair in the tournament. The Royals rode a beyond-believable 29-ball 97 from Sooryavanshi and a Jofra Archer new-ball burst to dismantle SunRisers Hyderabad on Wednesday — posting 243 and defending it

by 47 runs like it was a training game. Gujarat, meanwhile, were taken apart in Dharamshala on Tuesday. Royal Challengers Bengaluru handed them one of their heaviest defeats — 92 runs — as Siraj and Rabada were carted around, RCB piled up 254, and the top three of Sai, Gill and Buttler crumbled to leave Gujarat bowled out for 162. It was the kind of night that tests what a team is actually made of. The turnaround has been brutal for both sides. Rajasthan chose rest over nets on the eve of the game. Gujarat trained briefly, their frontline bowlers conspicuous by their absence. A 92-run defeat in a knockout match would splinter most teams.

But Gujarat are wired differently. They won 9 of 14 league games running the same play — no elaborate backup plans, no reinvention. Just Plan A, executed with conviction. When it clicks, it is ruthless. Dharamshala was an off day, not a crisis.

It's official. Lionel heads to the FIFA World Cup 2026 as defending champion



New Delhi. (Agency)

Defending champions Argentina have locked in their final 26-man roster for the upcoming World Cup, with talisman Lionel Messi officially set to spearhead the campaign across the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

The 38-year-old is poised to make history by appearing in his sixth World Cup tournament, extending his own national record. Head coach Lionel Scaloni has chosen continuity for this tournament, retaining the core that lifted the trophy in Qatar four years ago.

Familiar Faces and Key Returns

In total, 17 players from the 2022 championship squad are returning to the big stage. The heavy hitters include goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, veteran defender Nicolas Otamendi, and the formidable midfield duo of Rodrigo De Paul and Alexis Mac Allister. Enzo Fernandez, Julian Alvarez, and Lautaro Martinez also feature heavily in the squad depth. While the core remains intact, the squad will feature a few notable absences. Veteran winger Angel Di Maria was not considered following his international retirement after the 2024 Copa America, while left-back Marcos Acuna missed out on selection due to ongoing fitness issues. Meanwhile, midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso makes a triumphant return to the World Cup stage. After a heartbreaking injury ruled him out of the 2022 tournament, Lo Celso has earned his spot for a second finals appearance, having previously travelled to Russia in 2018. The Next Generation Steps Up Scaloni has also used this roster selection to usher in the future of Argentine football, integrating several highly touted young prospects. Valentin Barco, Nicolas Paz, and Giuliano Simeone have all been included in the 26-man list to provide fresh energy. Furthermore, forwards Jose Manuel Lopez and Thiago Almada are set to experience the tournament for the first time in their careers, rounding out a balanced attack. Argentina will launch their Group J campaign on June 16 against Algeria, before concluding the group stage with fixtures against Jordan and Austria.

Ben Shelton ousted by Belgian debutant in 2nd round, shock exit for Tsitsipas

Roland Garros 2026: Raphael Collignon and Matteo Arnaldi produced two of the biggest upsets of the French Open, knocking out Ben Shelton and Stefanos Tsitsipas respectively. The giant-killers will now meet in the third round with a place in the second week at stake.

Paris (Agency)

The second round of the French Open produced another major shake-up as two of the tournament's biggest names were sent packing on Friday, 29 May. Fifth seed Ben Shelton and former Roland Garros finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas suffered shock exits, leaving the men's singles draw wide open. Belgium's Raphael Collignon secured the

biggest win of his career so far as he stunned world number five Shelton in straight sets, 7-5, 6-4, 6-4. It was his first appearance in the Roland Garros main draw, and the 24-



year-old showed remarkable composure against the American. Collignon's strategy centred around neutralising Shelton's explosive serve. The Belgian broke Shelton at crucial moments in all three sets, wrapping up the victory in just over two hours. A visibly emotional Collignon later reflected on his tactical discipline, noting that staying calm and concentrating on his own service game was key to unsettling the American star. "I knew I had to try to stay

focused on my return, that his real strength was his serve and that I really had to concentrate on my own service game — that was the key," Collignon told reporters. "I tried to wait for the opportunities and whenever they came, in the end, I stayed fairly calm because I broke serve at just the right moment every time," he said. ARNALDI TAKES HIS REVENGE ON TSITSIPAS



On the adjacent court, Italy's Matteo Arnaldi added to the day's upsets by taking down 2021 finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-2. For Arnaldi, the victory was sweet revenge after losing to the Greek star on these same courts in 2024. Displaying incredible athleticism, Arnaldi wore down his opponent to reach the third round of a Grand Slam for the first time since the US Open. The defeat marks another painful chapter in Tsitsipas' ongoing struggles on the biggest stage. Once a dominant force on clay, Tsitsipas has failed to progress beyond the second round in his last seven Grand Slam appearances, a baffling slump that dates back to mid-2024.

Jemimah, Nandni, Yastika fire India to dominating win in T20I series opener vs England

INDW vs ENGW: India defeated England by 38 runs in the opening T20I of their tour, taking a 1-0 lead with strong all-round performances from Jemimah Rodrigues, Yastika Bhatia, and debutant Nandni Sharma.

Las Vegas. (Agency)

India made a strong statement in the opening T20I of their England tour, defeating the hosts by 38 runs in a performance that highlighted their depth, intent, and form ahead of the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup. Jemimah Rodrigues, Yastika Bhatia, and debutant Nandni Sharma all delivered standout performances as India went 1-0 up in the three-match series at the County Ground in Chelmsford. Batting first, India posted 188 for 7, anchored by a match-

defining 126-run stand for the second wicket between Jemimah Rodrigues and Yastika Bhatia. The visitors had a shaky start, losing Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana in the first over to Lauren Bell. However, Yastika quickly shifted momentum, taking Issy Wong apart for 27 runs in the second over to put Rodrigues was the standout performer, scoring a fluent 69 off 40 balls, laced with 10 crisp boundaries and a six. Yastika, returning to the T20I setup after two years, played a composed knock of 54 off 40 balls, ensuring India maintained control after the early setbacks. Deepti Sharma added a quick 22 off 13 deliveries at the death to push India close to the 190 mark. India back on track. England's bowling attack, led by Lauren Bell and Sophie Ecclestone, struck early but struggled to contain the flow of runs once the Indian batters settled. Fielding lapses and inconsistent lengths allowed India



to accelerate through the middle overs and set a challenging target.

NANDNI SHARMA STANDS OUT

In response, England started positively but soon lost momentum as India's bowling unit applied constant pressure. Debutant Nandni Sharma impressed with figures of 4-0-34-3, breaking the backbone of England's chase and recording one of the best T20I debut bowling figures for India in women's cricket. Amy Jones led England's resistance with a fighting 67, but she lacked support as wickets fell at regular intervals. The middle order failed to build partnerships, while India's spinners tightened control through the middle overs to push the required rate out of reach.

Former captain Heather Knight made 21 off 24 balls before being dismissed by Shree Charani, who finished with economical figures of 4-0-25-1. Kranti Goud picked up two wickets, while Deepti Sharma also chipped in with a wicket as England were restricted to 150 for 8 in their chase..

Upset

Urvashi Rautela

Reacts To AI Photo Of Her Kneeling In Front Of Aishwarya Rai: 'Stop This Toxicity'

Urvashi Rautela has spoken out against fan wars after an AI-generated image compared her with actresses including Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Deepika Padukone and Alia Bhatt. The actor urged fans to stop comparing women in the film industry and called out the "toxicity" around such online posts. The viral AI image ranked several Bollywood actresses based on global fame while placing some of them in submissive positions around a throne.

Urvashi Rautela says comparisons create negativity

The controversy began after a fan-made AI-generated image circulated online featuring several leading Bollywood actresses. The image placed Aishwarya Rai at the top in terms of global stardom, while Priyanka Chopra was shown sitting on a throne. Deepika Padukone and Madhuri Dixit were positioned beside her, while actresses including Alia Bhatt, Katrina Kaif, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Urvashi Rautela were shown kneeling with their names tagged. Urvashi later reshared the image on Instagram Stories and criticised the culture of comparing female actors online.

"I truly believe every actress has her own journey, hard work, and destiny. Comparing women or creating fan wars only spreads negativity. Let's celebrate talent, growth, and kindness instead. Please stop this toxicity," she wrote.

Urvashi Rautela attended Cannes 2026

The actor was among the Indian celebrities who attended the 2026 Cannes Film Festival this year. During an interaction with Brut from the red carpet, the actor said, "Whenever I represent my country, I'm no more Urvashi, I'm India... I'm wearing this very beautiful designer from Vietnam called JoliPoli and it's my pleasure to represent my country India at the opening ceremony of Cannes Film Festival 2026."

Cannes continues to attract Bollywood stars

Apart from Urvashi Rautela, several Indian actors made appearances at Cannes this year. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan continued her long association with the festival as a global ambassador for L'Oréal Paris, a role she has held since 2003.

Alia Bhatt also returned to the Cannes red carpet for the second time as L'Oréal Paris' brand ambassador. Deepika Padukone, who has attended Cannes multiple times in the past, had previously served on the main competition jury in 2022.



Vishal Dadlani REMOVED From Indian Idol 16 For Making A Political Remark? Singer Responds



Speculation had been rife that singer-composer Vishal Dadlani was removed from the popular reality show Indian Idol Season 16 after his comments on the NEET paper leak controversy sparked discussion online. As the rumours continued to gain traction on social media, he finally broke his silence and clarified the truth behind the reports.

Recently, Vishal Dadlani took to social media and reacted to the viral rumours surrounding his exit from the reality show. In the video he shared online, he first pretended to cry and then burst into laughter. He can be heard saying, "Here I am, baby!" He shared the video on his Instagram handle and wrote, "Remember not to trust anything you see online. There's a whole lot of manipulation going on. Keep fighting the good fight, and saying what needs to be said! Soon after he shared the clip, the comments section was flooded with reactions. One user wrote, "Indian idol famous bcoz of him believe or cry." Another user wrote, "Serving fresh, much-needed wisdom, as always."

Earlier, Vishal Dadlani had strongly reacted to the NEET paper leak controversy on Instagram, voicing his support for the aspirants affected by the incident. He said in a video, "I just want to express my support and solidarity with the students who have been hurt by this NEET paper leak. It's wrong that it happens every year; it's even more wrong that no government agencies are taking responsibility, and worse that ministers are sitting there saying it's no big deal." He added, "Those in power are not educated. This is going to destroy India. Whether you like it or not, whether it feels good or bad, this is the truth. Please, if possible, elect better people — vote for good, educated people." He further added, "If you want to secure your future and the future of this country, we have to elect better people. Please don't put these ignorant goons in power, even if they are from your caste or family. Please don't vote for them. Enough is enough."

Sunita Ahuja Reveals She Learnt Cooking At 15 To Impress Govinda: 'Mere Pati Ko Khane Ka Shaikh Tha'



Govinda's wife Sunita Ahuja has opened up about her married life and revealed that she learnt cooking at the age of 15 to impress the actor. Sunita made the comments during her appearance on Maa Hai Na alongside daughter Tina Ahuja, and her candid remarks quickly grabbed attention online. The episode also went viral after Sunita jokingly reacted to Govinda being called a "GOAT" during an event linked to the show.

Sunita Ahuja Talks About Learning Cooking Young

During a conversation on Maa Hai Na, Sunita was asked whether she enjoys cooking. Speaking about how food played a role in her relationship with Govinda, she said, "Khana bana bana ke to pati pataya hai na." Sunita further revealed that she started cooking at a very young age because Govinda loved food. "Maine to jaldi shaadi kar liya tha," she said, before adding, "Mere pati ko khane ka shaikh tha."

She then shared that she learnt cooking when she was just 15 years old in order to impress her future husband. The conversation soon shifted to daughter Tina Ahuja and whether she enjoys cooking herself. Responding to it, Sunita said, "Jab waqt aata hai na sab seekh lete hain." She also explained that children should not be pressured too much and should instead be allowed to enjoy life freely.

Sunita's 'Bakri' Comment About Govinda Goes Viral

During an interaction, Sunita was asked about the meaning of the word "GOAT". Reacting to it, she asked, "Bakri?" Someone from the audience then told her that Govinda is a GOAT and not a bakri. Sunita jokingly replied, "My husband? He's not a bakri! He's a..." She then burst into laughter before adding, "Shilpa samajh gayi."

Govinda And Sunita Ahuja's Marriage

Govinda and Sunita Ahuja are considered one of Bollywood's longest-lasting couples. The two reportedly met through family connections during their teenage years and eventually fell in love. Govinda was around 21 years old while Sunita was just 15 when they started dating. The couple secretly married in March 1987 before Govinda became one of Bollywood's biggest stars.

Katrina Kaif

And Vicky Kaushal Introduce Their Baby Vihaan To Paparazzi, Request Privacy

Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal, who were recently blessed with a baby boy, Vihaan, have chosen to maintain privacy for their newborn. While Katrina has been away from the limelight for quite some time ever since the birth of her baby boy, she stepped out with husband Vicky and her son two days ago, where she requested paparazzi not to click the baby's pictures. As per multiple reports, while Vicky Kaushal posed for the paparazzi and Katrina requested privacy. A paparazzo told Pinkvilla that both Vicky and Katrina made the paparazzi meet the baby and introduced him to them, but asked them not to click his pictures.

"Katrina was with Vicky, but she asked not to be photographed with the baby and introduced the baby to the paparazzi," shared a photographer with the portal.

About Katrina Kaif And Vicky Kaushal

Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal tied the knot on December 9, 2021, in a private yet grand wedding ceremony at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan after dating. The couple first announced their pregnancy in September 2025 with a soft black-and-white polaroid-style picture on Instagram. In the photo, Vicky was seen lovingly holding Katrina close while she cradled her baby bump. Their caption read, "On our way to start the best chapter of our lives with hearts full of joy and gratitude. ॐ"

Months later, in November 2025, Katrina and Vicky announced the birth of their baby boy with another joint statement. Without revealing the baby's face, the couple shared that they had welcomed "our bundle of joy" and thanked everyone for the love and blessings pouring in. The couple later revealed their son's name as Vihaan Kaushal in January 2026 while sharing the first glimpse of him online. Since then, Katrina has largely stayed away from the spotlight, embracing motherhood privately. For nearly two years. Over the years, the couple have kept their relationship and personal life private. Recently, Katrina shared the first glimpse of their baby boy while celebrating husband Vicky Kaushal's 38th birthday and penned a long note. "Today we celebrate your birthday with the most amount of joy with our little angel... My heart is full and grateful... Last few years you have been a pillar of strength, of love and light, with the patience of a saint 99% of the time," a part of her note read.



NEWS BOX

Mount Everest 2026 Sees Record Rush, Over 1000 Climbers Summit Before Closure

World.(Agency)

Mount Everest has seen its most historic climbing season yet, with a record-shattering 1,008 climbers successfully reaching the summit during the spring 2026 window. According to The Kathmandu Post, Nepal's Department of Tourism confirmed Friday that this figure marks the highest number of successful ascents ever recorded since expeditions to the world's tallest peak began. The extraordinary season set multiple milestones simultaneously.

According to Ram Krishna Lamichhane, director general of the Department of Tourism, the spring 2026 window broke records not just for successful climbers, but also for the total number of permits issued and the overall royalty revenues collected by the government. Unusually favorable weather windows allowed for high success rates. Khim Lal Gautam, the coordinator of the government's temporary field office at Everest Base Camp, confirmed the final tally on Friday morning, stating that exactly 1,008 mountaineers had stood on top of the world under this year's spring mountaineering program. The season began with fears of delay after a serac a block of glacial ice blocked the way, but Nepali climbers have established an alternative route. The world's highest peak, which straddles the Nepal-China border, can be scaled from either Nepal or the northern face in Tibet. But China closed its route this year. The Guinness World Records says the most ascents of Everest in a single season was 872, achieved in 2019. Nepal issued a record 494 Everest permits for foreigners this season, with a city of tents up at the foot of the mountain for climbers and support staff.

On Camera, Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin's New Glenn Rocket Explodes During Test

World.(Agency)

Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket exploded during a test Thursday on the launch pad in Cape Canaveral, Florida, though officials said no injuries were reported from the incident. "We experienced an anomaly during today's hotfire test," the company said in a brief statement posted to X, adding that "all personnel have been accounted for" "inability had tragic consequences." Elon Musk, who founded Blue Origin rival company SpaceX, offered his condolences, calling the accident "most unfortunate." Video from the incident shows smoke emerging from beneath the rocket -- which stands 98 meters (321 feet) tall -- bSpaceflight is unforgiving' Florida congressman Mike Haridopolos, whose district includes Cape Canaveral, said in a statement on X that he has been in contact with NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman regarding the explosion.

"I am grateful there were no reported injuries and thankful for the first responders, engineers, and launch crews who acted quickly," Haridopolos said. efore it fully combusts inThe explosion is the latest setback for the space exploration company owned by billionaire Jeff Bezos, and the New Glenn rocket is at the heart of the company's space ambitions. "It's too early to know the root cause but we're already working to find it," Bezos said on X shortly after the explosion. to a massive fireball.

Indians, Pakistanis taking our jobs: UK MP's racist remarks spark outrage

World.(Agency)d

British Independent MP Rupert Lowe has sparked major controversy after posting a series of inflammatory comments targeting Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the UK, claiming they were taking jobs from British citizens and altering the country's cultural identity. Lowe, who recently launched the right-wing political movement and party 'Restore Britain' after splitting from Reform UK, said he was unconcerned about being labelled racist for his remarks. "I don't believe we should import millions of Pakistanis and Indians to do jobs that unemployed Brits should be doing. If that makes me a racist, then so be it," the MP representing the Great Yarmouth constituency in eastern England wrote in a thread of posts on X.

He further claimed that parts of north-west England had become "like being transported to a foreign country" because of immigration and accused mainstream British parties of allowing "millions of low-skilled migrants from the Third World" into the country. In a series of posts focused heavily on Muslim communities, Lowe wrote that areas in Manchester were becoming "Islamic" and described immigration as a form of "colonisation".

He alleged that British family-run businesses had been displaced and claimed British women no longer felt comfortable in certain neighbourhoods.

He also criticised burqas, sharia courts, halal slaughter and public prayer gatherings, while pledging that a future Restore Britain government would "ban the burqa", "ban cousin marriage" and "ban the Kirpan in public spaces". Lowe also linked his anti-immigration rhetoric to his campaign around grooming gang investigations.

Referring to an upcoming parliamentary debate, he posted, "Progress to report – our rape gang inquiry debate is finally taking place in Parliament on Monday". He urged supporters to pressure MPs to attend the discussion. The remarks triggered criticism online, with opponents accusing Lowe of stoking racial and religious tensions through sweeping generalisations about immigrants and Muslim communities.

US-Iran truce deal awaits Trump as strikes test ceasefire

US Vice President JD Vance told reporters that Trump was not yet ready to approve it, even though negotiations had "made a lot of progress."

TEHRAN.(Agency)

US and Iranian negotiators edged toward a deal to extend their fragile ceasefire for 60 days, but the potential breakthrough was still hanging on President Donald Trump's approval, US sources told AFP on Thursday. The development came after Washington and Tehran accused each other of violating the truce, underscoring the volatility of talks three months after the Middle East war began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. The US sources confirmed reporting by Axios that the two sides had agreed on a memorandum of understanding to prolong the ceasefire and launch negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme. Under the proposed deal, shipping through Hormuz would be unrestricted, with no tolls or harassment; Iran would remove all mines within 30 days; and the United States would lift its naval blockade if commercial traffic resumes, Axios reported. But Iran's Tasnim news agency, citing a source close

to Tehran's negotiators, said the text had not been finalised and that Pakistan would be informed if a deal was reached.

Iranian sources cited by local media said any deal would be complete only when announced by Tehran, not unilaterally by Trump. Late on Thursday, US Vice President JD Vance told reporters that Trump was not yet ready to approve it, even though negotiations had "made a lot of progress." "We're going back and forth on a couple of language points," he added. US strikes on the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas prompted Iran to target "the American airbase that served as the source of the attack," state broadcaster IRIB reported, citing the Revolutionary Guards. The Guards did not specify the location of the base, but Kuwait, which hosts US troops, said its air defences responded to incoming fire. Kuwait's foreign ministry condemned "the criminal Iranian attacks that targeted the territory of the State of

Kuwait with missiles and drones, in a dangerous escalation." US Central Command called the attack an "egregious



ceasefire violation." Iranian forces had fired at four ships trying to transit the Strait of Hormuz without authorisation, IRIB reported Thursday. Iran has blockaded the waterway since the war began. US forces said they had intercepted five attack drones in and around the strait, and prevented the launch of a sixth near Bandar Abbas. Iranian foreign ministry

spokesman Esmail Baqaei called the US strikes truce "violations." A US official told AFP the actions were "measured" and "intended to preserve the ceasefire".

Iran's Guards threatened a "firm response" to any renewed attacks. Strait standoff Before Thursday's strikes, Amir, a 27-year-old software developer in Tehran, said fears of renewed fighting were constant. "I feel like nothing is certain yet," he said. "The daily question is: Will there be missile strikes tonight?" A key focus of the proposed deal is restoring full traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the closure of which has curbed the vast flows of oil and gas that normally pass through it. Oil prices bounced higher Thursday after reports of the strikes, reversing much of Wednesday's deal-driven fall. Markets remained choppy as traders balanced hopes of a ceasefire extension against the risk of renewed fighting. Markets mostly fell.

Blue Origin rocket explodes on the launch pad during an engine-firing test

CAPE CANAVERAL.(Agency)

A Blue Origin rocket exploded during a test at the launch pad Thursday night, shaking nearby homes and briefly painting the sky orange. Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin said its New Glenn rocket exploded during an engine-firing test. No one was hurt, according to officials at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. "It's too early to know the root cause but we're already working to find it," Bezos said via X. "Very rough day, but we'll rebuild whatever needs rebuilding and get back to flying. It's worth it." The massive New Glenn was grounded in April after it left a satellite in the wrong orbit because of engine failure. It was only the third flight of the rocket that Blue Origin intends to use to launch landers to the moon for NASA, including the landers that will take astronauts to the lunar surface.

The company had been on track to

launch a prototype lunar lander to the moon on a flight test this fall. Earlier this week, the space agency awarded Blue Origin a contract worth hundreds



of millions of dollars to launch a pair of moon buggies in the next few years as part of the Artemis program.

"Spaceflight is unforgiving, and developing new heavy-lift launch capability is extraordinarily difficult," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said via X. He promised to provide

information on any impacts to the Artemis program, including the moon base that he recently outlined.

Homes shook in nearby Cape Canaveral and Cocoa Beach around 9 p.m., with residents turning to social media to wonder what happened. Launch Complex 36 is visible from the beach, and the internet quickly filled with photos of an orange fireball.

The rocket was supposed to blast off next week with internet satellites that are part of the Amazon Leo constellation in orbit. Emergency crews remained more than an hour after the explosion. Officials stressed there was no threat due to fumes or other potential hazards. Space Force officials said the explosion would not affect upcoming launches by other companies from other pads. United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket is due to blast off Friday night with a batch of Amazon Leo satellites, the same kind that this rocket was supposed to take up.

Crews recover remains of six of nine workers missing after chemical tank implosion at Washington State Mill

LONGVIEW.(Agency)

Crews have recovered the remains of six of nine workers who were missing after a massive chemical tank ruptured at a paper mill in Washington state, releasing a flood of caustic liquid capable of causing severe burns and lung injuries, officials said Thursday.

In all, 11 people were killed in the disaster, including the three yet to be recovered, and eight injured. It's one of the deadliest U.S. workplace accidents in recent decades. A tank containing more than 500,000 gallons (1.9 million liters) of a chemical mixture used to break down wood for making paper collapsed Tuesday morning at the Nippon Dynawave Packaging Co. in Longview, a city along the Columbia River. The collapse occurred during a shift change, and the six workers whose remains were recovered had been in an area where they would congregate in the morning as they awaited their assignments for the day, said Matt Amos, Longview fire

battalion chief. Among the victims was a grandfather who was always willing to help anyone and a young husband described as selfless and caring, according to friends who



organized fundraisers for the victims' families. The recovery of the victims has been slow and deliberate, complicated by the dangers posed by the remaining chemicals and other industrial hazards, Amos said. Crews were steering clear of a zone closest to the tank, in case of further collapse. They have been working with engineers to determine whether

damaged buildings around the tank are safe to enter. As they collect the remains, crews must decontaminate them before turning them over to the coroner's office for identification. The searchers also must decontaminate themselves. Authorities said the cause of the disaster is still under investigation. They have not released the names of those who were killed, but friends and relatives had begun confirming their names and posting online fundraisers to support their families. Gilbert Bernal, a grandfather who was an electrician at the plant, was the first confirmed death, said his friend Todd Cornwell. "He was one of the most genuinely good people that you've ever met. He would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it. He was always there willing to help in whatever need to be done," Cornwell said. CJ Doran, who was 26, was among those presumed dead, according to a GoFundMe post verified by the crowdfunding site.

Canadian PM Mark Carney calls for new partnership with US as Trump mulls whether to renew free trade agreement

Carney called for a "true partnership" with closer cooperation in key sectors facing growing pressure from global competition.

TORONTO.(Agency)

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called for a new partnership with the United States on Thursday, just weeks before President Donald Trump decides on whether to renew the free trade agreement between the countries. Carney said in a speech at the Economic Club of New York that there should be a "true partnership" that reimagines cooperation in specific sectors challenged by global competition. He made the remarks ahead of the mandatory

review of United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, in July.

Carney said Canada is diversifying away from the U.S. and signing trade deals with dozens of countries around the world.

"Our core objective across these partnerships is to increase our strategic autonomy. Because we live in a world where integration has been weaponised. Because a country that cannot feed, fuel or defend itself is not truly sovereign," Carney said. Trump's actions — including launching a trade war and suggesting Canada become the 51st U.S. state — have infuriated Canadians and created the political environment for Carney to win the job of prime minister after promising to confront Trump. The Canadian prime minister has emerged as a spokesman for a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the U.S. under Trump. Carney has set a goal for Canada to double its non-U.S. exports in the next decade, saying American tariffs are causing a chill in investment. "Canada Strong will help make America great again. The examples are legion where we should work together

and compete with the world together. And to those ends, we have made specific, practical proposals to the US Administration," Carney said. Canada has been protected by the heaviest impact of Trump's tariffs by the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement but that trade agreement is up for a review and certain key sectors like aluminum and The prime minister noted Canadian aluminum exports to the U.S. are the energy equivalent of 10 Hoover dams and that it doesn't make sense to replace Canada. "With America's growing energy needs, does it make sense to build the Gigawatts needed to replace Canada?" Carney said.

He also noted that on automobiles, Canada is America's biggest customer, and "an integrated North American market for production is the best and most durable way to confront intense global competition." Carney also said on critical minerals, with its vast reserves of potash, nickel, copper and uranium, Canada can be the most reliable supplier that America needs to put affordable food on the table, to strengthen its national defence and meet

exploding demand to power AI.

"At a time of a global energy crisis, Canada provides the United States with the reliable power and critical minerals that help fuel American growth: 99% of U.S. natural gas imports, 85% of electricity imports and 60% of crude oil imports," Carney said. steel have been hit hard by tariffs. Carney said Canada is America's largest customer, buying more goods than China, Japan and the Germany combined. "When Canada and the United States have had our differences over the years, we have always — eventually — worked through them, because our shared values and common interests run deep. They run through our economies," he said. Carney also met with representatives of BlackRock, JP Morgan Chase, Blackstone, Morgan Stanley and Apollo while in New York.

Dominic LeBlanc, Canada's minister for U.S. trade, is heading to Washington next week for talks. LeBlanc has previously warned that the free trade agreement could be subject to annual review and that uncertainty could be the objective of the Trump administration.